

TRANSFORMING NEW CONVERTS FROM MEMBERS TO DISCIPLES IN
MARANATHA FRENCH SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH:
A CHRIST-BASED MODEL

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A FINAL DOCUMENT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
DAYTON, OHIO
DECEMBER, 2014

**United Theological Seminary
Dayton, Ohio**

**Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project Dissertation**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
1. MINISTRY FOCUS.....	4
2. THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL.....	15
3. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION.....	30
4. METHODOLOGY.....	67
5. FIELD EXPERIENCE.....	73
6. REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION.....	89
APPENDIX	
A. ACTIVE PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM.....	103
B. PRE & POST TEST QUESTIONS.....	105
C. FORMAT SAMPLE TOPIC PRESENTATION.....	108
D. SAMPLE ASSESSMENT FORM.....	112
E. PARTICIPANTS OVERALL PERFORMANCE.....	114
F. FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	125
G. QUESTIONNAIRE.....	127
H. THEME SONG.....	130
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	132

ABSTRACT

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Jason E. Vickers, Ph.D.

This project was implemented in the Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Newark, New Jersey. It addressed the issue of the non involvement of the new converts in the life of the church and sought to transform them from simply church members to disciples. Participants were invited to attend an eight-session series on discipleship. The methodology used a pre and post test survey to collect necessary information. Data collected from the field revealed a significant shift towards discipleship. In utilizing Christ's method of making disciples, a Christ-based model for the new converts at Maranatha could be very successful.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project could not have become a reality without the sustenance and the guidance of the Almighty and powerful God. For this, I give him praise and thanks, and render to him all credit and honor. For all the success, to God be all the glory!

I am thankful to my immediate family, my wife Carolle and my two sons Carl and Berny for their unconditional love and support during all the phases of this great endeavor.

My gratitude goes to my extended family that has been supportive of me. I do not want to mention names so that I do not omit some of them. However, it would be unethical if I do not take a minute to express my deep appreciation to my brothers-in law, Dr. Smith Olivier and elder Andre Lavache whose wife, Mimose, had left their home for four days to come stay with my two kids while I was attending a peer session in Tipp City, Ohio. Dr. Olivier had done the same sacrifice in January 2014.

My professional and context associates have done a tremendous job. Thanks to all of them! My peer associates have been a source of encouragement. The Lord shall bless them. Dr. Harold Hudson, associate Dean of the Doctoral Studies, and faculty staff, in particular Dr. Moore, have been very kind and helpful to me. May God bless their ministry!

Finally, I want to take a pause in order to thank my mentor, Dr. Vickers. He has been very supportive. Two things I want to mention about him; first, he has never put

pressure on his students, and secondly he is a deep scholarly thinker. He puts no academic pressure on you, but at the same time expects you to submit to him a fine work in the end. Once again, thank you, Dr. Vickers.

INTRODUCTION

Go and make disciples of all nations¹ constitute the greatest assignments that Jesus had bestowed on his disciples before ascending to heaven. Unfortunately, instead of making disciples as stated by Christ, the church seems inclined to making members. Rounding up people and getting them to join the church does not finish the task that Jesus commanded. This alarming situation leads to low retention and a huge dropout of its new converts.

Maranatha Seventh-day Adventist Church located in Newark, New Jersey has been facing the challenge of simply making members for years. The church has failed to assimilate those who have been evangelized. The church too often equates baptism of new converts to the end of their spiritual journey, and overlooks Jesus' command of making disciples. As a result, the percentage of new converts leaving the church shortly after baptism due to lack of Christian maturity is considerably high. The non involvement of new converts in church activities due to lack of maturity in their relationship with Christ creates the necessity for a Christ-based discipleship model that is biblically rooted, historically sound, and theologically relevant for new converts in Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church.

If we do not have a plan to disciple the new converts, we may inoculate them against Christianity. They will live for a while in the wonder of Christ's grace and love,

¹Mt 28:19 (NIV).

but may stumble in their walk with the Master when temptations, troubles, and then doubts attack them. Led to accept Christ as their Savior, but too often, no one is guiding them in their walk with Him as their Lord. If they drop out of their early walk with Christ, they may be resistant to new appeals to follow Christ.²

The purpose of this Doctor of Ministry program is to develop a Christ-based discipleship model that can help new converts build a constant, personal, and spiritual relationship with Jesus. This project, “Transforming New Converts from Members to Disciples,” seeks also to tackle the issue of non-involvement of the new converts through active participation in church affairs and ministry. The goal is to move new converts from being simple religious consumers to healthy and productive disciples like Christ. To be a disciple of Jesus means inviting others to look with the eyes of faith so that they too see this already present community and reorder their lives in response to its presence.³

Transforming new converts from members to Disciples is in line with the Master’s final Great Commission. Making disciples was the prevailing passion and top priority of Christ in order to proliferate his gospel, and that must be our passion and priority as well.⁴ The main job of the church consists of making disciples. In other words, every church should be a training school for Christian workers.⁵ The greatest help that

²Jane Thayer, *Teaching for Discipleship: Strategies for Transformational Learning* (Unpublished, 2009), 2.

³Thomas R. Hawkins, *Cultivating Christian Community* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2001), 26.

⁴Philip G. Samaan, *Christ’s Way of Making Disciples* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 13.

⁵S. Joseph Kidder, *The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011), 57.

can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and depend on him, not on the minister.⁶

The following chapters outline the cursory look leading to this project that consisted of transforming new converts from simply church members to Disciples.

Chapter one, Ministry Focus, lays out a historical background of the context where the program has been implemented, Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church located in Newark, New Jersey. This chapter also displays the spiritual autobiography of the researcher and the juncture leading to this endeavor.

Chapter two, The State of the Art in This Ministry Project, provides a succinct survey of literature selected and the variety of research employed to inform and guide the author in this ministry project.

Chapter three, Theoretical Foundations, sets the theoretical framework of the project and gives the historical, biblical, and theological rationale to validate this project.

Chapter four, Methodology, focuses on the research method utilized. It also highlights the research design, instruments, and measurement tools for evaluating the program.

Chapter five, Field Experience, presents the project and its implementation. It provides the results of the field experience through collection, analysis and interpretation of data collected.

Chapter six, Reflections, Summary, and Conclusion, contains general and biblical/ theological reflections, suggestions made to the researcher, considerations and recommendations, a synopsis of the project and concluding remarks.

⁶Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 58.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Context

Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church is situated at 890 South Orange Ave in Newark, New Jersey. Newark is county seat and one of the major cities of Essex County. Essex County is a county located in the northeastern part of New Jersey. According to the 2010 United States Census, Newark has a population of 277,140 peoples. The census also revealed that there were 94,542 households, and 61,641 families residing in the city. However, the 2011 data show a population of 279,074 people living in Newark.

Firstly, founded in 1666 by Connecticut Puritans led by Robert Treat from the New Haven colony, and located in the heart of New Jersey's Gateway Region, Newark is the largest municipality in New Jersey, the 67th largest city in the United States, and one of the nation's major air, shipping, and rail hubs. Newark is also headquarters to several major corporations, such as Prudential Financial and PSEG. It is worth citing some other important based Newark companies, such as New Jersey Transit, IDT Corporation, Net2phone, Horizon Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Jersey, etc. It is the home of

Newark Liberty International Airport, the first municipal commercial airport in the United States, and one of the busiest today.¹

With five colleges inside the city limits and 44,000 students matriculating, Newark is one of New Jersey's premier centers of education. One of the most prestigious of Newark's colleges is the city branch of Rutgers University, which offers four-year baccalaureate degrees as well as graduate degrees in law, nursing, business, and public administration. Beside Rutgers University, Newark houses some other prestigious educational institutions, such as Seton Hall's Law School, one of the largest law schools in the country, The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, the state's largest health education center, The New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), famous for pioneering activities in computer-integrated design and manufacturing, biotechnology, microelectronics, and computerized communications.

The city of Newark houses Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church. Most of its surviving founder members have moved in the last two decades. However, one of its credible founders is still living in the area and continues to attend the church. Thanks to his good memory, it becomes easy to know more about the existence of this congregation.

Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded about thirty-three years ago in the city of Montclair, New Jersey. At that epoch, there was no Haitian Seventh-day Adventist in New Jersey. Those who professed the Seventh - day Adventist faith in the state did not really know each other. They took buses or trains on Saturday mornings to go to church. Most usually attended Hebron Seventh-day Adventist Church

¹Newark, New Jersey, accessed December 13, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newark,_New_Jersey.

in Brooklyn, New York, the first Haitian Seventh-day Adventist church established in the United States. In the 1980s, undocumented Haitian people were reluctant to talk while they were in the train by fear not to be arrested by immigration authorities. Therefore, it was not easy to recognize or identify those who shared the same ideologies or challenges.

Because the great majority of these Haitian Adventists attended Hebron Seventh-day Adventist Church, it became obvious for them to get acquainted either in church or the train they took on Saturday morning. It was in this circumstance that about a dozen of them got to know each other and discovered they were facing a common need of worship.

To quell this common challenge, they agreed to organize a meeting in Newark, New Jersey. The meeting effectively took place on the second Wednesday of March 1980 at the informant's home. Fifteen people attended the gathering, which was a good start. After discussion and reflection, they came up with the decision to launch a Seventh-day Adventist group in New Jersey, welcomed by all the participants.

On Saturday, March 15, 1980, the group officially held their first worship service. They were fifteen to congregate that day. "It was a fascinating worship service," declared the informant. After the preaching of the word, they all were convinced that the decision was divinely oriented. They did feel the presence of God in their midst that Sabbath morning.

It did not take long for their increase in members. However, unfortunately due to divergences among the founding members, the number reduced to twenty about one year later. After holding their first evangelistic series in 1983, seventeen people were baptized and officially admitted into the New Jersey Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists.

Under the leadership of their first minister who has been pastor for twenty-one years, the church has known some considerable growth.

The year 1999 was one of the most interesting the church had ever known. It was in July 1999 that they acquired their own building located at 890 South Orange Ave, Newark, New Jersey. With new techniques and methods of evangelism, the church was able to baptize forty-eight people in just one month. In this epoch, young men were highly interested in theological study. One of them became the youth pastor of the church in 2001 after completing his undergraduate studies at Columbia Union College in Silver Springs, Maryland. Being greatly satisfied with this young minister's dynamic leadership, the New Jersey Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists promoted him senior pastor of the church in 2005.

Since then, Maranatha became a mission driven, outward-focused and evangelistic minded church. The senior pastor in collaboration with the board of elders oversees the different ministries. Each year the church holds three evangelistic series, in spring, summer, and fall. An average of sixty-five new members joins the church list annually. In addition to spiritual activities, the church offers services to its members and to the community at large. In the summer of 2007, the church inaugurated a food pantry where they serve about eighty-six families twice a month. Once a month, they hold a soup kitchen ministry as they feed over a hundred people. Twice a year, the church offers a health fair to the community, which greatly attracts elderly people. Basic courses, English as a Second Language (ESL) and computer literacy classes are freely taught in the church facility.

In regard to social activities, the church organizes each year two barbecues mostly attended by the youth on Memorial and Labor Days. It also holds on Labor Day a special program entitled “Back 2 School” during which school supplies are given to the parents. One of the most attended social activities, called Recreation Night or Creole Night, is organized at the end of each trimester with a significant presence of most youths from all denominations.

Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church gave birth to three other churches: Philadelphie in Jersey City, All Nations in Maplewood and Bethel in Irvington. Despite the moving of members, the facility is too small. Beginning in January 2012, they now hold two services on Sabbath morning, trying to solve this overcrowded challenge. The first service is French and the second in English mostly attended by the youth. The church has now a membership over 725 people.

Despite the numerical growth, the church among many others faces two great challenges. The senior pastor has recently tackled one of them, men’s effectiveness in church activities with great results. New converts’ involvement in the life of the church remains a challenge. This concern is one of the main reasons that cause new converts to leave early after their entrance in church. If someone is not familiar with the church, this person may not see this problem when considering statistical data furnished to explain the numerical growth. However, over 50% of that growth is generated by immigrant Adventists coming from Haiti. Therefore, the rate of retention among the new converts remains very low, under 35%.

Surveys and study conducted have revealed that early exit of the new converts has been generally caused by lack of Christian maturity. An area understudy for many years

is the retention of new members after conversion. The abandon of the church by former adherents is a real problem in Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church that necessitates an urgent solution. Being a victim because of my father's early exit after baptism constitutes a justified motive to be a participant of that solution.

Justification – Spiritual Autobiography

At the age of ten, life appeared incredibly confusing to me. It was most likely a moment of total paternal absence. My father led a nomadic life that damaged our ideal father-son relationship. The time spent with him was very limited; because of other wives and kids. It was hard to get some quality time from a father who had nineteen children with five different wives. The situation got worse when it became possible to witness this type of loving relationship among those who live in our neighborhood. In fact, my uncle and his seven kids were a classic example.

At thirteen, tough questions pressed my mother. Why was our dad not home everyday like our cousins? Why do we spend limited time with him? Why is the cost of my education not supported by my dad; and so on? Mom tried to answer those interrogations but could not fully convince me. One of my uncles who had a stable family provided me with a key answer related to one of these questions. He said my father left the church at twenty. He was asked to pray at worship service and did not show up that day. For a second time, he was scheduled to read the Bible during Wednesday evening service and did not come. Because of his refusing to get involved in church activities, one of the church elders rebuked him harshly. After this sad experience, he left the church and has not developed any fear for the Lord. This is why he has so many wives and kids and cannot spend quality time with you and your siblings, my uncle replied. It was a

shocking response to me, knowing my dad had left the Baptist church to become a nominal catholic.

Growing up, dad was confronted as per my uncle's revelation of him leaving the church about a few months after baptism. He honestly answered my questions and even gave reasons why he had left his congregation. Not only was he a timid man, but also, he did not know how to do things properly in church. He had never attended a pre or post baptismal class. While attending a revival organized by the church, he felt touched by the message and got baptized after five days of attendance. He was suddenly asked to do what he had no knowledge about. He did not show up because he did not want to be ashamed. The elders' remarks were discouraging and inappropriate; to avoid any possible future confrontation, he left the church.

There is a huge difference in the lives of those who leave the church with those who remain. Throughout my Christian journey and my professional life, this discrepancy becomes obvious. Some families do well when they stay and get involved in church activities. Others are backward as they leave and do not participate. My extended family bear witness to these lamentable scenarios. Siblings and cousins are victims of leaving the church. One of the main reasons for this early exit is deficiency in maturity generated by a lack of teaching, training, and mentoring new converts in addition to a poor knowledge of the Bible, and particularly of Jesus Christ.

My dad's experience and similar cases experienced in my pastoral ministry have led me to believe that new converts to the church should be granted special and intentional attention. One of the most plausible ways to get new converts involve in church is to teach, train and equip them. In addition to welcoming them, teaching them to

maintain a significant relationship with Jesus is necessary. When properly instructed, new converts will become more self-confident to participate in church activities.

Too often, the church sees baptism as the result of evangelism. Training programs are necessary to give a better understanding of evangelization. The congregation needs not to wait for months to start these programs of formation. Evangelism is not an event but a process. Therefore, the Christian is called to evangelize throughout their lifetime. The newly baptized gets to understand that as being a church member, they become a disciple of Jesus Christ. As a result, they need to present Christ in a way that people could put their trust in God through Jesus, accept him as their personal Savior, and serve him as their king in the fellowship of his church.

Conjunction

The most recurring theme in my spiritual autobiography is leaving the church, mostly due to a lack of maturity in the knowledge of Christ. Experiencing this unpleasant case and being a victim of this situation, attending school at an advanced age was the result of my dad leaving the church at twenty years old. Considering my ministry context for the past seven years makes me deeply appreciative of Romans 8:28, where the apostle Paul says, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” Greatly disturbed by seeing people, especially new converts leaving the church it becomes a duty and responsibility to help others become ground in Christ.

Throughout my spiritual journey, many congregants leave the church due to a lack of spiritual maturity causing concern and sorrow for me. However, coming from a similar family, the belief that something positive is possible to solve this problem is

present in my mind. Taking my own life as an example, it is evidence that the church can work in such a way to help new converts overcome this challenge as they remain and participate in church activities.

My most shocking experience of people leaving the church soon after conversion happened in 1994. In April 1994, the church organized an evangelistic series on the book of Revelation. At the end of the campaign, two hundred fifty-three persons gave their lives to Jesus through baptism. About six months later, less than 15% of those new converts remained in the church. Because they were ignorant of the basic teachings of God's word and did not have a mature relation with Jesus, they just left a few months later. Being a member of the visitations committee gave me the opportunity to meet with people who became hostile to the gospel. It was an appalling experience.

Another disastrous ecclesiastical spiritual experience was that of a former member of Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church. In August 1999, the church held an evangelistic series for one month. Three days before concluding the campaign, a young man, possessed by an evil spirit, came to church. After spending quality time in prayer, healing occurred by the power of the Holy Spirit. Coming into his good sense, he accepted Jesus as his personal Savior and got baptized on Saturday, September 4, 1999. It was an amazing event; his mother also received baptism on that day. She still attends the church.

About four months later, this young man discontinued to attend the post baptismal class organized for new converts, went to a dance club, and got sick. The elders of the church went to visit him, prayed for him, and healed him. However, before leaving his house, one of the elders told him expressly not to go to such places anymore. He did not

follow the elder's instruction. A few months after his recovery, he left the church, enjoyed his life, and cut all contacts with the church officials. Unfortunately, three years later he passed away.

There have been several difficult times in my life such as experiencing parental deaths unexpectedly and a brutal car accident that took my former wife's life on her way from work. There have been many lows in my spiritual journey. However, learning the basic principles of a Christian life, Christ, my special friend since my baptism, compels me to remain in church and actively participated in all activities. A church where most members involve in the ministries cannot be stagnant or regressive. It will grow and remain healthy. The members in this case will build up a better relationship with God and with one another. When they are members of the same ministry and work together, they know each other better and have the opportunity to develop a genuine Christian friendship.

My personal and professional life compared to that of those who have left the church shortly after their baptism has led me to develop a Christ-based discipleship model. Through this program, new converts will find no better place than the church. They will gain confidence, participate in missionary activities, and remain in church until Christ returns. As an experienced associate Discipleship pastor, those who keenly involved in church activities make me confident about the feasibility of this project. The church exists to better people's lives and to prepare them for eternity. During the flood, only those who were inside the ark were saved. It thus becomes imperative for the new converts to remain in the church as they invite others to join them. Leaving the church

has eternal consequences. In general, those who cut themselves from the fellowship of the saints do not have a healthy relation with God as well.

This project aims at finding a program that can help every new believer to develop a constant, personal, and spiritual relationship with Jesus by actively engaging the work of the Master. Once each new convert in the Maranatha church is taught the accounting principle Going Concern, which means they shall stay in business with and for Christ permanently, they will intentionally remain committed to the Lord Jesus until he comes back. Over the past twelve years, baptism occurred for many people; however, few remain in the church. It is really time to close the back door! The best way to do that is to transform new converts from members to Disciples.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

The launching of this project has required an extensive amount of reading and orderly research in order to get a better understanding of the topic under study. This cram covers various topics, from self-discipline and spirituality to psychology, from evangelism to discipleship, from church growth to mentoring, nurturing, and retention. Considering the importance of leadership in the process of forming disciples, the literature reviewed has also included material on leadership.

Professional Development as Transformative Learning, New Perspective for Teachers of Adults – Patricia Cranton

Cranton points out that the traditional ways of adult and continuing education were based on experts who impress their ideas on learners without developing their personal advancement. For the purpose of this project, a thorough reading of chapters four, five, and six has been tremendously helpful. These three chapters can be viewed as the pivotal point of this book. Cranton takes a fresh and new look at self-directed learning, and its benefit to both learning, the author looks at different approaches from diverse schools of thought and concurs with Candy in that self directed learning is seen to

have the dimensions of personal autonomy, self-management, learner control, and autodidaxy.¹

Cranton shows how teachers and facilitators can and must be understood as adults engaged in transformative learning. After underlining the importance of self-directed learning, she puts great emphasis on critical reflection and its role in self-directed learning. More than anything, critical thinking holds the key for transformation in self-directed learning. She then argues that the combination of self-directed learning with critical thinking produces a transformative agent for both learner and educator. *Professional Development as Transformative Learning* provides the reader with practical and intellectual information.

Practical Psychology for Pastors
William R. Miller and Kathleen A. Jackson

Dealing with new converts is not an easy endeavor for the setting of a Christ-based discipleship model. New converts mostly come from various backgrounds and have sometimes gone through several traumas. As such, it is fundamental for the sake of the project to get acquainted with literature relating to psychology. The way the authors depict practical issues on psychology, such as reflective listening, formulation of a problem, building a more resourceful community, and so on, plays a critical role in the task of teaching and counseling in the context of this project. The historical overview provides a good perspective for understanding one's own presuppositions. The chapter topics cover some of the most common problems a pastor will encounter in ministry.

¹Patricia Cranton, *Professional Development as Transformative learning: New Perspectives For Teachers of Adults* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 73-74.

The chapter on “Pastoral Self-Care,” which offers advice on maintaining psychological health, avoiding crisis, and preventing personal and occupational burnout, has been utilized to assist the postulant disciples to be balanced and also take good care of their own being. Change has always been a great enemy. The reading of this practical manual conveys ways how to help people build personal motivation for change. Practical Psychology for Pastors provides what pastoral leaders can learn from psychology that will assist them in ministry.

**How People Grow: What the Bible Reveals about Personal Growth
Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend**

Discipleship is not a stagnant but a dynamic and lifetime process. It therefore requires personal growth in various domains such emotional, cognitive, and spiritual. That is in fact the core of this project, moving new converts from members to Disciples. The authors of this book, Drs. Cloud and Townsend, have unlocked age-old keys to growth from scripture to help people resolve issues of relationships, maturity, emotional, and overall spiritual growth. The writers shatter popular misconceptions about how God operates and show that growth is not about self-actualization, but about God’s sanctification. The chapters about God’s grace, the growth in forgiveness, and the pain of guilt, project sound resonance to an attentive reader. The work is full of great stories of real people, which is one of the most valuable pieces of it.

The authors discuss several essential processes that make people grow. They also explain how those processes fit into a biblical understanding of spiritual growth and theology. Not only do they underline the responsibilities of pastors, counselors, and others who assist in the growth process but they also echo the role that people must play in their personal growth. The helpful and practical questions found at the end of each

chapter allow concluding that there is something for everyone in this book, especially for those who desire personal growth and for people who are in a position to guide others in their own growth.

The Call: Finding and Fulfilling The Central Purpose of Your Life Os Guinness

New converts need to know that their allegiance to Christ implies three important aspects of the spiritual journey: the call, the commission, and the contribution. In his book, *The Call*, Os Guinness examines the biblical mandate to surrender ourselves to God's call in all aspects of life. The author approaches his subject with the understanding that all Christians are called by God to serve him and the body in some special way. He uses several convincing stories to show how people in Christianity or outside have answered a call in their lives, found meaning, purpose, joy, and left their incredible mark on history.

After a thorough reading of this manual, the following considerations can be made. It becomes easy to discover that one must be devoted to Jesus instead of their service to Jesus. Christ's follower ought to be inner-directed by God than other-directed by the opinions of others. God calls us to a life of faith, we need to spend deliberate quality time with him and glorify him in every detail of life. This book has been helpful in the preparation of material for this project. Once people know why they are called they get motivated to live in harmony with their call.

The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor: A Theology of Witness and Discipleship – Scott J. Jones

One of the essential reasons we fail in making disciples resides in the fact we attempt to create a separation between evangelism and discipleship. In his book, *The*

Evangelistic Love of God, Jones provides convincing arguments to close this gulf. He sees evangelism as initiation into Christian Discipleship. Throughout this manual, he argues that evangelism is best understood as an aspect of the church's mission that seeks to help persons enter into Christian discipleship.² Evangelism is therefore seen as the proclamation of the Word of God. The best way to positively respond to that proclamation is to become a disciple in living an obedient life to God's will by making other disciples.

The centrality of God's saving love for humankind leads to the coming of Christ and the proclamation of the reign of God. When we love God we obey Him by becoming active agents of the kingdom. As obedient disciples, we witness and proclaim the good news to fellow human beings. The author also underlines that the ministry of evangelism is both motivated and governed by the love that Christ commanded. The goal of discipleship is to bring Christian maturity. In other words, evangelism focuses on entry into Christian discipleship to fulfill the will of God.

The Cost of Discipleship **Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

Following Jesus should not be a blinded decision; in other words, being a disciple is not an easy task and requires much from the adherent. At this level, it appears very logical for the new converts to know what their decision entails. In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer clearly explains what it means to be Jesus' disciple. In other words, the book's major theme centers on what it really means to be a disciple of Christ. As per the author, Christ calls us to come and die. Christ wants all of us; nothing

²Scott J. Jones, *The Evangelistic Love of God and Neighbor* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 65.

is to be held back. One is either a disciple of Christ, or they are not; there is no middle ground.

Choosing to be a disciple of Christ is to be exposed to rejection because Christ, himself, was rejected. Being a disciple of Christ is to accept sufferings. Following Jesus Christ's steps is to concur to face all the calamities and mistreatment that he had to go through. Therefore, as Disciples of Christ, we must take up our cross, not just any cross, but the one Jesus has provided for each one of us, and we are to carry it until the end. The author clearly differentiates what he calls cheap grace and costly grace, and also conveys the true meaning of discipleship.

No Man Left Behind: How to Build and Sustain a Thriving, Disciple-Making Ministry for every Man in your Church – Patrick Morley

The writer of any gender inclusive project, after reading this book, will be tempted to change its title *from No Man Left Behind to Nobody (Man and Woman) Left Behind*. This has been an exemplary case for the topic understudy. This book is a great resource for men's ministry and an inspiration to keep it on track. The authors suggest that the best way to start this program is to create a vision for the men stating where one wants to take them, find a way to help others to catch that vision, and develop a mechanism for them to keep the momentum. In other words, the book clearly lays out the psychology of how to do it, the psychology of the process, the system and how to implement it.

The chapter on discipleship, full of biblical passages to back up what has been said, constitutes an invaluable resource for the development of a discipleship program. And when that program is properly implemented, it will produce committed disciples, dynamic leaders, and a productive church environment. The techniques suggested by the

authors to develop a thriving men's ministry program are applicable to any discipleship program including men and women. They give great ideas on how to transform new church members to become Disciples.

Understanding Your Potential: Discovering the Hidden You Myles Munroe

New believers generally think that, because of their lack of maturity in faith, they are unqualified to do anything good in the ecclesiastical realm. However, Dr. Myles Munroe in his book *Understanding Your Potential* points out their wrongness. The reading of this book instills the conviction that every new convert has the ability to do something great and important as soon as they develop a relationship with Christ. In fact, the author believes that human beings were endowed with certain potentials at birth, which they need to tap into.

This manual is a motivating factor that can lead someone to discover the awesome potential trapped within them. The author illustrates his point by using the biblical scenario of Joshua, the successor of Moses, where the Lord told him to be courageous for he already had what he needed to get the job done. Whoever reads this book will feel uncomfortable with their present state of accomplishment and make plan to further their achievements in life.

How To Ask Great Questions: Guide Your Group to Discovery With These Proven Techniques – Karen Lee – Thorp

The development of a discipleship program for new converts necessitates a lot of communication skills. Asking good questions, due to its importance, should be considered as an art, a science and could not be a dull and boring activity. It requires psychological, technical, and philosophical approaches. In her book, *How to ask*

Questions, Lee—Thorp goes along with this understanding when she presents the top ten principles for asking great questions. The volume seems small, but it is very profound.

From the very beginning, the author sets the purpose and tells what the book is about, which is the power of a good question. It is in fact a crucial point, since we will have to interact with people. Many times, people just ask questions; but after reading this book, one can find the fundamental reasons of questioning: who, what, when, where, why, and how. A question which is asked inappropriately may have a negative impact on an individual or a group of people. Therefore, it is very important to learn how to ask proper and accurate questions. With emphasis on some moral key issues such as honesty, truth which give the book a positive image, the writer teaches respectful behavior in regard to how ask questions in order not to discomfit others. The principles discussed in this book have been helpful to the realization of the project.

Organic Disciplemaking: Mentoring Others Into Spiritual Maturity and Leadership - Dennis McCallum and Jessica Lowery

The development of a discipleship program for new converts necessitates having mentorship skills for a successful implementation. In their book *Organic Disciplemaking*, McCallum and Lowery share a great deal of information on how to mentor others into spiritual maturity. They give a broader view of discipleship by pointing out that discipleship does not stop at the point of established faith. Rather, discipleship is a long term process and should continue until a person (new convert) is able to pass on to others what they have learned.

The authors accomplish a skillful work in providing in this manual the basics needed to mentor someone into spiritual maturity and leadership. Several critical principles for growth are found in this book. More importantly, the writers show

discipleship is a dynamic process. One of the key reasons for coaching or mentoring a disciple is for them to become disciple makers. The reading of this book has been very helpful in the sense that it provides various practical ideas and insights for the development of a discipleship program for new converts.

Becoming a Healthy Disciple: Ten Traits of a Vital Christian
Stephen A. Macchia

A disciple is someone who tries to live like Jesus and produces good fruit for the everlasting kingdom. To be able to bear fruit, the disciple must be healthy. In other words, they are to develop and maintain a good relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. In his foundational and practical book *Becoming A Healthy Disciple*, Macchia unfolds the secrets to a vital Christian life. He also asks the direct and challenging questions that every individual needs to answer in their daily attempt to emulate Christ.

In the very beginning of the book, the author clearly explains what a healthy disciple is and shows that Discipleship is a continuous state of learning from the Master, Jesus Christ. His thought is fully summarized in the following statement:

Becoming a healthy disciple is a lifelong journey. We won't ever arrive at the fullest picture of what God requires of us. Discipleship is apprenticeship, and the Master doesn't expect perfection, only skill development that leads to a deeper relationship along the way. We will fall short of his glory, and we will disappoint him more often than we care to imagine. But the fact is, the awesome love of the Lord for all his disciples – past, present, and future – is unfathomable, unconditional, indestructible, and incredible. Living by human ability and insight, we will disappoint him, but when we live by his strength and provision, we delight him and bring him great joy.³

As they are called to a new life in Christ, this practical book on Christian Discipleship is capable of teaching the new converts how they shall live to emulate Christ

³Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming A Healthy Disciple: Ten Traits of a Vital Christian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 14.

and become a healthy disciple. This manual has been a tremendous tool in the preparation of the material for this project.

Becoming A Fruit – Bearing Disciple **Terry Thomas**

Bearing fruit is the core assignment that Jesus gave to his Disciples. It is not optional but mandatory. In his book, *Becoming A Fruit- Bearing Disciple*, Terry Thomas appears to catch very well this requirement of Jesus. He raises the critical concern of how to biblically mature the new converts in the faith in order to bring fruit for the heavenly kingdom. The author outlines and defines in practical ways the process of how one becomes a fruit-bearing disciple. He cites his own congregation as a proving example to establish a process to develop mature disciples.

The key technique as per the writer for someone to become a fruit-bearing disciple is to hang with the Master. At this level, one can learn Jesus' process or approach to make disciples. In other words, when we hang with Jesus we will learn all the lessons that can help us to make followers. To be disciple makers like Jesus, one must learn how to mingle with those who do not know Christ and meet their needs. Finally, to develop fruit-bearing disciples, the writer compels for intentional training. As per Thomas, discipleship is costly. However, he refers to the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount as compensation and the joys of a disciple.

Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ - George Barna

New converts are considered as babes in faith. They need to be nurtured in order to become true Disciples. In his book *Growing True Disciples*, George Barna proposes several strategies for producing genuine followers of Christ. He begins the book with the

need of this writing and the necessity to focus on disciple making within the church. He also describes what scriptural discipleship is and how it is much more than accomplishing a few things for God. The author gives an extended view of discipleship, which is devoting one's whole self to God and the teachings of Christ. Not only does he discuss the importance of discipleship but he also gives a concise look at discipleship exemplified in the Bible.

This book constitutes an invaluable resource for the realization of this project, which is transforming new converts into Disciples. The author clarifies that the ultimate goal of a disciple is to become more like Jesus. The reading of this manual provides some significant resource that can lead to the development and implementation of a Christ-based discipleship model within the church.

Christ's Way of Making Disciples
Philip G. Samaan

Making disciples for Christ is not a somewhat easy effort. Discipline and methodology are critical for the accomplishment of this task. We cannot offer what we do not have. In other words, one needs to be a disciple first before being able to make disciples. In his book *Christ's Way of Making Disciples*, Philip shows how Christ did make disciples. In this manual, the author emphasizes that the need of the church today is not merely to make members, but rather to make disciples. The writer explores the dynamic process and progressive steps of Christ's strategies in making disciples. He also demonstrates how Jesus transformed the lives of many people to make them fruit-bearing disciples.

Making disciples is not an optional endeavor but a command of Jesus, the disciple maker per excellence. The author does not simply underline the necessity for the church

to make disciples but he also enumerates several characteristics of a true disciple. For instance, a true disciple is someone who lives for the supreme purpose of glorifying God in producing good fruit for the eternal kingdom. In summary, the nine characteristics of a true disciple that the writer cites in this book have been a source of great inspiration in the preparatory work of this project.

Making Disciples: Developing Lifelong Followers of Jesus **Ralph Moore**

As one considers the core message of the Great Commission, making disciples can be seen as everybody's business. In other terms, those who call themselves Christians or Disciples of Christ have the duty of making disciples. In this manual, the author's genius for realness and simplicity makes any authentic believer want to go and make disciple as soon as they accept Jesus as their personal Savior. He shares great stories and gives insight for building disciplemaking churches that reproduce and change people's lives. One of the main lessons drawn from the reading of this book is the emphasis put on intentional discipleship and the possibility to get every individual embark in this marvelous ministry.

As per Moore, there is no mystery involved in the process of making disciples. You only need a love for people and a sense of responsibility toward the Lord and His command to "make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19).⁴

⁴Ralph Moore, *Making Disciples: Developing Lifelong Followers of Jesus* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2010), 17.

Finding Them, Keeping Them: Effective Strategies for Evangelism and Assimilation in the Local Church – Gary McIntosh & Glen Martin

Christ's assignment to his disciples included not only the making of disciples but also the teaching of the new believers. A church must be intentional in doing evangelism if they want to keep the neophytes. In their book *Finding Them, Keeping Them*, McIntosh and Martin propose ten key strategies that really go along with Jesus' command found in Matthew 28:19. The first five strategies are about how to do practical evangelism. However, it is worth underlining that the last two principles convey a clear message with the comprehension that evangelism is a dynamic activity. These two strategies, progression evangelism and production evangelism, lead to the second part of the book, which is about assimilation or retention of new converts.

The authors in the second segment of the book mention five techniques and strategies to assimilate the new converts in the life of the church so they can become disciple makers. The writers focus heavily on several ecumenical professing Christians. However, if the strategies cited in this work are contextually applied, they will definitely help keeping new converts in the church. The reading of this manual has played a critical role in finding methods to lead people to Christ and to keep them as they mature in their relationship with the risen Savior.

Values – Driven Leadership: Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry – Aubrey Malphurs

The call to make disciples seems nowadays to be no longer a priority. A church that wants to develop a Christ-based discipleship model must have a set of core values that will clearly define its priority. The new members need direction. It is searching for the leadership to provide them with direction. In his book, *Values-Driven Leadership*,

Malphurs offers crucial insights on the importance of core values and leadership.

According to the author, values enhance credible leadership. A church's core values are a vital part of its character, which is also determined by its mission, vision, and strategy.⁵

Once the purpose is given, the new member will be motivated in order to accomplish it.

The author encourages preaching, teaching, and training to show that the special gifts found in Ephesians 4: 11 do not belong only to some specific categories but to all believers. This view is well expressed when he writes that a core value in many new paradigm churches is lay ministry. The value slogan is "Every member a minister."⁶ The training can be used to further implement the values. The writer stresses that pastors and leadership teams need to teach these values and help the members to catch them. The reading of this book provides good insights for the development and implementation of a Christ-based discipleship model for new converts.

**The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader: Becoming the Person
Others will want to follow – John C. Maxwell**

Developing a successful discipleship requires a lot of leadership skills. In fact, making disciples is an incontestable leadership endeavor. In this book, Maxwell teaches the qualities that one needs to be a leader and how to become a trustfully leader. He also stresses the importance of leadership when he attempts to explain the failures of some people because of their lack of leadership. As per Maxwell, everything rises or falls on leadership. This manual describes the characteristics that leaders must possess and cultivate in order to be successful.

⁵Aubrey Malphurs, *Values-Driven Leadership: Discovering and Developing Your Core Values for Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 10.

⁶Ibid., 124.

Though these twenty-one qualities are irrefutable for a leader to be successful, Maxwell puts a particular emphasis on character as one of the most important. The reading of this book helps not only to discover the qualities of a leader but also shows how to implement them. This manual has been tremendously useful in the preparation of this project.

CHAPTER THREE
THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS
Biblical Foundation

It is true that the word discipleship is not written in the Bible. However, it makes no doubt this concept can be traced from a biblical stance. When we consider Moses' relationship with some of his elders in the Old Testament, as one looks at Jesus' ministry in the New Testament, we can boldly say that discipleship constitutes a biblical model. Indeed, the ministry of Apostle Paul and Timothy represents an irrefutable proof that the Bible teaches and values discipleship.

Toward a Biblical Understanding of the Word Discipleship/ Disciple

Like the word Trinity, the term Discipleship is not written in the Bible. However, the scriptures make plenty of allusions to this connotation. In this case, Diop has rightly written,

The concept of discipleship expresses the most profound conceivable relationship and allegiance according to Jesus' own statements in the Gospels. The most urgent need of the church is not only to make converts but to make disciples. Converts can leave the church as they come in. Disciples display an unswerving allegiance to Jesus that nothing can deter.¹

The most common word derived from discipleship is disciple.

The English word disciple is borrowed from the Latin *discipulus*, itself derived from *dissipere*, to grasp intellectually. Etymologically, the word disciple, in Greek

¹GanouneDiop, *Make Disciples: The Art of Moving Beyond Conversion to a Passion for Christ* (Huntsville, AL: Oakwood College Press, 2010), 2.

mathetes, is derived from the root math and is connected to the concept of learner, pupil, follower, or apprentice. The word disciple is connected to the idea of learning.²

Thus, it is easy to note the biblical origin of the term discipleship. According to Del Dunavant, the word disciple is used in the Bible over 264 times, depending upon the translation.³ Concluding his word study, he indicates that a believer is a disciple as soon as she follows Jesus, as soon as he accepts God's gift of eternal life. You do not become a disciple only after you have learned to be good enough! Discipleship is, however, a lifelong process.⁴

Two scriptural passages have been selected to lay the biblical foundation of this project; the first text is Exodus 18: 17-20, and the second is Matthew 28: 16-20.

Old Testament

The word disciple is not found in the Old Testament, but the concept is not absent either. In the New Testament Jesus called the twelve in Mark 8: 34-35 to become his disciples. God did the same in the Old Testament with Abraham (Gn 12:1) and his descendants (Am 3:3). Jesus wanted his disciples to become like him (Lk 6:49); God desired the same thing for the Israelite people (Lev 11: 44-45). These few passages among many others show without ambiguity the allusion to Discipleship in the Old Testament.

Exodus 18 can be divided into two big sections. In part one (18:1-12), one witnesses Jethro's acknowledgment of the God of Moses. The word of Yahweh's victory

²Ibid., 5-6.

³Del Dunavant, *From Membership to Discipleship: A Practical Guide to Equipping Members for Ministry* (Lincoln, NE: AdventSource, 2006), 54.

⁴Ibid.

over Egypt has spread so as to reach Jethro's ears. Unlike the nations of 15:14-16 who tremble at such news, Jethro is attracted to it, and so he comes to Moses.⁵ The focus for this project is on the second part (18:13-27) that has reported Jethro's advice to Moses in particular verses seventeen through twenty. It makes no doubt that verses 13-27 center on community structures that give shape to the life of faith.⁶

You are not acting wisely, his father-in-law replied. "You will surely wear yourself out, and not only yourself but also these people with you. The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now, listen to me, and I will give you some advice, that God may be with you. Act as the people's representative before God, bringing to him whatever they have to say. Enlighten them in regard to the decisions and regulations, showing them how they are to live and what they are to do."⁷

Structure, Literary and Historical Context

In considering the literary and traditio-historical analysis of the whole chapter, one does not observe much discrepancy among the scholars. This point is clearly elucidated by Childs in his book. There is general agreement among critical scholars that chapter 18 is basically a unified narrative. Attempts, such as that of Gressmann, to find two complete strands have remained extremely unconvincing. Only occasionally are there signs of duplication.⁸ Commenting on the chapter Rita wrote,

Exodus 18 constitutes one story narrated in two parts. In both parts the central figure is Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, a Midianite priest. The verses 1-12 focus on Jethro's response to the "good news" of Yahweh's great act in freeing Israel

⁵Peter Enns, "Exodus" *The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 367.

⁶Terence E. Fretheim: *Exodus Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1991), 195.

⁷Ex18:17-20 (NAB).

⁸Brevard S. Childs: *The Book of Exodus, A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1974), 321.

from Egyptian oppression. The remainder of the chapter, vv. 13-27, focuses on Jethro's activity in effecting a systematic change in the Israelite community, which would result in a more efficient administration of justice.⁹

It becomes obvious to discover that there is a historical dimension to the second part of the chapter as it is expressed by Childs.

A whole series of historical changes in Israel's legal system structure are mirrored in the story through the variety of vocabulary used as well as in the concepts of the Mosaic office. When one turns to the second part, interest is focused immediately on the details of the new judicial organization. Interest focused on understanding how the early judges performed their duties, such as delegating the legal responsibility through the proper channels, and the like. Christian biblical scholars continued very much along the same lines.¹⁰

In addition to its historical dimension, the second section of the chapter presents another societal aspect of the organization of the Jewish people in the wilderness that is clearly explained by George Arthur Buttrick.

The civil organization of Israel's society in a later day was founded by Moses, under Jethro's instruction. The account is both etiological and historical in purpose. In Numbers 11:11-17, 24-30, later followed by the Deuteronomist (Dt 1:9-18), Moses himself is said to have found the burden of his work too heavy; and the foundation of the more differentiated administration is represented as having ordained by God, without any reference to Jethro.¹¹

The immediate literary context found in the text leads to the necessity of a discipleship model. Douglas makes a clear description of the problem in the following statement.

Exodus 18:13 pictures a lamentable situation. Now came a day when Moses could wait no longer to address the caseload, and in spite of spending all daylight hours hearing court cases, he had apparently not finished when evening came. Jethro saw that this could not go on indefinitely. His own experience as a Midianite leader may have involved him in regular judging among the Midianites, and it was obvious to him that Moses had overcommitted his time to his judicial role.

⁹Rita J. Burns: *Old Testament Message, A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983), 136.

¹⁰Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 333-334.

¹¹George Arthur Buttrick: *The Interpreter's Bible, vol. I* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1980), 966.

Nothing was wrong with Moses' serving as a judge; instead it was clearly an obligation of his as leader of the people. What was wrong was his serving as the only judge, without any help, for simple cases as well as for complex ones.¹²

In his book *Coaching 101* Logan, talking about the importance of training and mentoring others, helps understand better Jethro's advice to Moses.

Whenever you invest in developing people your own workload decreases. Are you tired of being the answer-person? Start developing more people who can field the questions. Are you worn out from being the go-to person for every project? Raise up additional leaders who can oversee new initiatives. Are you shepherding too many people? Coach more shepherds to help you share the load.¹³

Theology, Message and Contemporary Significance

In Exodus 18: 17-18, Jethro did not find Moses' line of reasoning convincing and countered with a simple but convincing argument. The method cannot be right if it results in everyone's frustration and exhaustion. The judicial workload was too much for one man.

The advice Jethro gives is much needed remedy to a problematic situation. It is still relevant to today's church. One of the main reasons new converts leave the church is a lack of knowledge. The ministers mostly see themselves, as minister only, by taking upon them all the responsibilities. Not only do they kill themselves but also they do not have time to properly feed the flock. Even though they have good intention, but it is impossible for them to be able to do everything at the same time. Through Jethro's advice to Moses, one can understand that it is not God's intention to give just one person the responsibility and the care of his people.

¹²Douglas K. Stuart: "Exodus" *The New American Commentary*, vol. 2v (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 415.

¹³Robert E. Logan and Sherilyn Carlton, *Coaching 101* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2003), 14.

In fact, in Numbers 11: 10-15 is recorded what R. Allen calls Moses' lament. In this passage one can witness Moses' complaint about the people.

He realized that the burden was too demanding and he could not manage all these people alone. Moses was distressed as he found the assignment too heavy for him. Moses is incensed at the people for making his role as a leader an unbearable one and toward Yahweh for assigning him this overwhelming burden of leadership. His reaction is pointed primarily toward God, challenging the divine decision to place him in the parental role of providing for this nation.¹⁴

The passage makes understand that God acknowledged Moses' request to have helpers in leading the people. Numbers 11:16-17 clearly depicts Yahweh's reply to Moses as Cole wrote it,

The Lord instructed Moses to appoint seventy elders from among the leaders who were also officers among the Israelites. The Hebrew term *soter* ("official" or "scribal assistant") suggests a kind of official with scribal function within a given group. Moses' role was to gather the seventy elders and present them before the Lord at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the standard place for revelatory activity from the Lord and where priests and Levites were anointed and commissioned for service.¹⁵

At this point it is interesting to note that the Lord would impart to these elders some of his spirit that had already been poured out upon Moses.

In reading carefully Exodus 18:19-20, one can easily identify the concept of discipleship. Douglas helps understand Jethro's advice to Moses as God's initiation and confirmation to discipleship.

Jethro did not suggest that Moses discontinue judging, or that he stop serving as a representative of the people's problems to God, or that he leave off being God's spokesperson to teach the people God's decrees and laws. The people surely needed someone to show them the way to live and the duties they are to perform, and Moses was indeed that person. Moreover, Jethro did not arrogate to himself

¹⁴R. Denis Cole, "Numbers" *The New American Commentary*, vol. 3B (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 187.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 188-189.

divine wisdom but was careful to couch his words as suggestions subject to God's confirmation.¹⁶

Describing Moses' responsibility, Ronald E. Clements in his commentary on verse 20 wrote: You must instruct them. All the people were to be taught the basic contents of case law, and this teaching would normally be carried out in the context of family life.¹⁷ A critical reading of Exodus 18:24-26 gives assumption that the plan works well. Jethro's advice to Moses can be seen as God's command. This principle of dividing labor has set the growth of the early church as it is reported in Acts 6: 1-6.

Conclusion

The biblical model found in the Old Testament (Ex 18: 13-27) shows clearly that the pastor has the responsibility to prepare others to lead. The most important job of the minister is not preaching but training others to ease the burden. Once they are well trained and equipped, these disciples will be able to teach the new converts. As they become more knowledgeable about God's love and church's policies, they will remain in church to joyfully serve the Lord.

Exodus 18: 13-27 is not just a story of Moses receiving some helpful advice from Jethro. The flow of the narrative is plain. The people want to know what must be done in order to settle their disputes. They are coming to seek God's will. Apparently, they have no clear way of knowing what that is. So, for the time being, it is up to Moses to tell them, and this, as seen before, proves too taxing for him. As they join the church the new

¹⁶Stuart, *The New American Commentary*, 417.

¹⁷Ronald E. Clements, "Exodus" *The Cambridge Bible Commentary* (London, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 109.

converts do not know much about their new faith. It is up to the pastor to make disciples to tell and teach them so they also become disciples rather than being simply members.

New Testament

If the word disciple is not clearly stated and found in the Old Testament, the situation is different in the New Testament. It becomes a dominant term in the four gospels and the book of Acts. Baker's evangelical dictionary of theology gives a convincing definition.

The characteristic name for those who gathered around Jesus during his ministry was disciple. He was the teacher or master; they were his disciples (*mathētai*), a term involving too much personal attachment and commitment to be adequately rendered by pupil. The name was carried over into Acts, where it frequently has the general sense of Christian (cf. Acts 14:21).¹⁸

The New Testament biblical passage chosen for the support of this project was Matthew twenty-eight verses sixteen through twenty. However, because it contains the greatest assignment that Jesus had given his disciples before ascending to heaven, verse nineteen is the main focus point.

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."¹⁹

Matthew 28: 16-20 is generally called the Great Commission. It contains the final instructive words from Jesus to his disciples. Craig L. Blomberg, summarizing this passage, wrote,

¹⁸Walter A. Elwell, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 235.

¹⁹Mt 28: 16-20 (NAB).

This short account contains the culmination and combination of all of Matthew's central themes: (1) the move from particularism to universalism in the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom; (2) discipleship and the establishment of the church; (3) Jesus' commands as ultimately incumbent on Christians; and (4) the abiding present of Jesus as teacher, as divine Son of God, and the risen and Sovereign Lord of the universe.²⁰

It is also noteworthy to read the comment of T. R. France on this fundamental passage.

This final short paragraph plays a crucial role, which justifies its being set apart as a final main section of the narrative structure. In these few words many of the most central themes of the gospel reach their resolution and culmination. The preparation of the twelve as Jesus' task force, which had apparently ended in irreversible disaster in 26:56, is now resumed as they (or rather eleven of them) are restored to their position of trust and responsibility and given the final instructions for fulfilling the mission for which they were originally called in 10:1-15.²¹

The writer furthers his theological and biblical analysis when using the passage to establish the link existing between discipleship in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. He even tries to remove several doubts about the insertion or inclusion of this biblical concept in the Old Testament.

Jesus' assignment to the disciples in Matthew 28:19-20 represents the ideal of discipleship in the Old Testament. The covenantal relationship that God had with Israel should be extended to the other nations through Israel's witnessing. Since they have failed in their mission Jesus reiterates it to the eleven and per extension to each and everyone. Jesus' final words in the gospel of Matthew are often referred to as the Great Commission, and scholars have pointed out how closely this scene resembles, in its overall sense and content if not in detail, the commission narratives which occur throughout the Old Testament where God's often reluctant and inadequate servants are sent out to fulfill his purpose with the assurance of his empowering and his presence to go with them; such stories are

²⁰Craig L. Blomberg, "Matthew" *The New American Commentary*, vol. 22 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 429.

²¹R. T. France, "The Gospel of Matthew," *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 1107, 1108.

told notably of Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Such stories mark the beginning, not the end, of that person's service, and this is how it is here for the disciples.²²

Church should not be reluctant in proclaiming the good news. The one who has sent his people possesses all the power they need to accomplish this task. One must understand that going to make disciples is not a suggestion or an optional matter. It is rather a mandatory and divine requirement. This assignment was given by the risen Savior, the King of kings.

Before formally giving them the Great Commission, Jesus assures the disciples he has the power to do so. It was a reassurance because, when he sent the seventy out, they testified that the Devil has submitted to them in the name of Jesus. In his earthly ministry Jesus had declared his authority as the Son of Man to forgive sin (Matthew 9:6) and to reveal the Father (11:26). Now as the risen Messiah he has been given all authority, glory, and power, who is rightly worshipped by all peoples and nations and whose dominion and kingdom last forever (Dan.7:13-14).²³

Matthew 28:16-20 can be viewed as a summary of the whole Gospel. Jesus appears as the risen Lord who is worthy to be approached in an attitude of homage or worship. The teacher par excellence commissions his disciples to carry on his teaching and also affirms that all authority has been given to him. The passage clearly puts emphasis on discipleship as it is stated by Daniel J. Harrington.

The theme of discipleship also reaches maturity in the climatic appearance. The inner circle of Jesus' disciples who previously were characterized as showing little faith reacts appropriately to the risen Lord. And they receive their

²²Ibid., 1109, 1110.

²³Clinton E. Arnold, "Matthew, Mark, Luke," *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 189.

commission to make disciples, baptize, and teach. Thus the theme of discipleship so prominent throughout the Gospel comes to certain ripeness in Matthew 28:16-20.²⁴

Matthew 28:19 shows unequivocally the duty and responsibility of the church.

Bloomberg, in the following statement, helps grasp a better understanding of Jesus' final order to his followers.

The main command of Christ's commission is make disciples (matheteusate). To make disciples of all nations does require many people to leave their homelands, but Jesus' main focus remains on the task of all believers to duplicate themselves wherever they may be. The commission is expressed not in terms of the means, to proclaim the good news, but of the end, to make disciples. It is not enough that the nations hear the message; they must also respond with the same commitment, which was required of those who became disciples of Jesus during his terrestrial ministry. The verb make disciples also commands a kind of evangelism that does not stop after someone makes a profession of faith. The truly subordinate participles in v.19 explain what making disciples involves, baptizing them and teaching them obedience to all of Jesus' commandments. The first of these will be a once-for-all, decisive initiation into Christian community. The second proves a perennially incomplete, life-long task.²⁵

It is interesting to comprehend the meaning of the text. The disciples are commissioned to make disciples of all nations (*panta ta ethne*), not to simply make church members. One of the reasons new converts leave the church is the fact that they are not taught. Baptism without further instruction is not sufficient to keep someone in church or make that person a disciple. It is time for the church to stop considering baptism as the end of the Christian journey. It must rather be seen as the beginning. After choosing his disciples, Jesus took time to teach them. He invested his time, ideas, and efforts in them in order to equip them for the work. His personality was so reflected in

²⁴Daniel J. Harrington, "The Gospel of Matthew," *Sacra Pagina Series* vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 416.

²⁵Blomberg, *The New American Commentary*, 431.

these disciples that even the critics who accused them had to acknowledge the fact that they were with Jesus (Acts 4:13). They followed and observed attentively the Master before he sent them out to do missionary work. Jesus used a model of constant repetition to instruct his followers. He taught them the importance to study the word and remain in contact with the Father through prayer.

Teaching obedience to all of Jesus' commands forms the heart of disciple making. The Apostle Paul, understanding the importance of teaching, invites Timothy his young partner in ministry to do so. Command and teach these things (1 Tm 4:11). The teaching part of the Great Commission has been neglected for too long. This is why so many new converts leave the church after a short period of their conversion. If teaching was not so critical Jesus would not ask to his disciples to do that. God has always wanted his people to know much more about him. And this can be done only through sound biblical teaching.

Commenting on Matthew 28:20a about the teaching part of the Great Commission Craig L. Blomberg writes,

Jesus' words further demonstrates that Christian ethics and morality should first of all focus on Jesus' teaching, even though the Old Testament still remains relevant, as one sees how it is fulfilled in Christ (Mt 5:17-20), and even though the rest of the Testament remains relevant as further explanation of Christ and his teachings.²⁶

The same Jesus who commanded the making of disciples and the baptizing of them is the one who ordered the teaching of those who would accept the message. Teaching is so crucial that it has a double appearance in the passage. An individual would not ask for baptism without being aware of what baptism is. It is through teaching

²⁶Ibid.,433.

someone can know about repentance that leads to baptism. The true knowledge about God is generally gained through teaching after baptism. To remain in church and become disciples making disciples for the kingdom of God, new converts need to be taught. It is a principle traced from the Old Testament, emphasized by Jesus, and correctly applied by the apostles including the Apostle Paul.

Matthew 28:16-20 brings out the most important themes of the Gospel. The Father has given Jesus supreme and universal authority. Christ on his part has given the Great Commission to his followers. The disciples are to share their discipleship not only with their fellow Jews but also with all the nations. It is evident that discipleship does not stop at baptism but continues on with solid biblical teaching. Teaching is so critical that Jesus promised to send his substitute teacher. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you (Jn14:26). The biblical principle is that the new converts need to become disciples. They should be taught while they grow into a fully devoted follower of Jesus. They then must be equipped to introduce their best friend Jesus to others.

Conclusion

Both the Old and the New Testaments value discipleship. When a church neglects discipleship, its membership will not grow numerically and spiritually. Discipleship really matters since it has been modeled and commanded by Jesus. When a church forsakes discipleship, most of its new converts will soon give up on faith, and will be easily swept away by false doctrines. To avoid confusion, laziness, and complacency, and reach out spiritual growth among the new converts, the church needs to involve them in ministries through an effective Christ-based discipleship model.

Historical Foundation

Throughout the ages, history has always played a critical role in the lives of individuals. In fact, Christians are people who live with the stuff of church history. History is generally defined as the study of past events, in particular in human affairs. It is probably in this context an author wrote that those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it. The sixteenth-century German reformer Philip Melancthon makes it even clearer. Human life without knowledge of history is nothing other than a perpetual childhood, nay, a permanent obscurity, and darkness.²⁷

The church as an institution makes no exception in chronologically keeping its events. The following statement made by Smither gives a clear understanding of this point of view.

In the early church there was a great deal of interest in the lives of the martyrs, saints, monks, and bishops and their memories were preserved through the genre of hagiography or through sermons. Church fathers like Augustine and Jerome not only contributed to this church literature but encouraged its reading as a means of teaching in the church. Not surprisingly, the authors of hagiography were typically clergy and the audience was generally understood to be the communion of saints.²⁸

In light of the church's mission and function to teach the community of faith, Heffernan regards Hagiography as narratives or literary mosaics that actually served as catechetical tools. Comparing them to the Bible stories housed in the stained glass of

²⁷Gordon L. Heath, *Doing Church History, A User-friendly Introduction to Researching the History of Christianity* (Toronto, Canada: Clements Publishing, 2008), 19.

²⁸Edward L. Smither, "To Emulate and Imitate, Possidus' Life of Augustine as a Fifth Century Discipleship Tool" *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, March 1, 2008: 1.

medieval cathedrals, he concludes that the primary social function of sacred biography... is to teach (*docere*) the truth of the faith through the principle of individual example.²⁹

This segment of the project has explored the ways the church has dealt with its new converts in the past, not only to retain them but also to make them become disciples. Considering the historical development of the concept discipleship in the light of this project was very critical. The survey has been very selective because the scope of this endeavor has not permitted to make an exhaustive analysis throughout all the past ages. Thus, only some periods have been quickly examined.

First and Second Century

Acts 2:42-47 depicts one of the most plausible discipleship models found in the early Church. The practices outlined in this passage include evangelism, teaching, fellowship, ministry, and worship. Unfortunately, the discipleship model described in this passage has not lasted for long. As Peter, Paul, and most of the other apostles and lay leaders of the first generation of Christians were now gone, the Church has faced a crisis of leadership. In his doctoral thesis, Hughes gives a brief description of the challenges that the church encountered.

The critical period between A.D. 70 and A.D. 135 posed a number of concerns. Some of the issues facing the church were contextual variables beyond the control of the local congregation, while others were endemic to the growth of the church as an emerging institution among second generation Christians. In this latter sense, the formidable concern of the church involved its doctrinal and the new sense of polity that issues from these normative beliefs and principles and exposed its egregious errors.³⁰

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Conley H. Hughes Jr., *A Discipleship Mentoring Ministry as a Model For Member Retention*, (D.Min Thesis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, MA, May 2002), 89.

However, the vacuum left by the death of the apostles did not remain empty for long. The Church was not passive to this situation. The early Christians were eager to not only preserve their movement, but to institutionalize it as well. The church was understandably concerned with retaining its followers.³¹ Being alert of these challenges the Apostolic Fathers developed corpus of writings that would provide the church with a sense of continuity in its beliefs, practices, and polity. There is even some possibility that in the city of Rome a baptismal creed was developed as early as the mid-second century to refute Gnosticism; the formulation eventually evolved into our contemporary versions of the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed.³²

The Didache, A Discipleship Tool

Discipleship was mostly presented in a literary form in these epochs. One of the earliest documents written to convey a discipleship endeavor was the Didache.

The document clearly embodies very legalistic strictures on how to live, asserting that one either lives according to the way of life or the way of death. Preoccupation with lifestyle standards is evident as the Didache urges the practice of Christian virtues like abstinence, shunning idolatry, patience, humility, and goodness.³³

In his attempt to show the existence of a discipleship model through the Didache during the early church era, Hughes furthers his explanation in stating that,

This small document was, nonetheless, helpful in engaging the attention of the second century Christians, and in the later development of the Church. The tract provided Christians with an understanding of the moral postulates of the Gospel writings, as well as offering a manual that could be helpful in catechizing Christians into the way of life. It is in this latter sense that the Didache provided several insights that can be gleaned for an understanding of discipleship

³¹Ibid.

³²Mark Elleingsen, *Reclaiming Our Roots, An Inclusive Introduction to Church History*, vol. 1 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 61.

³³Ibid., 37-8.

mentoring and the task of spiritual formation. The document tends to propose a process for the new convert seeking help from a sponsor for his spiritual growth.³⁴

Since discipleship is the heart of teaching or transmitting the biblical and theological principles of the faith, it makes no doubt that the Didache which means teaching has played a critical role in the discipleship process of the early Church. Hughes in his thesis refers to the Didache as one of the ancient documents that puts emphasis on a discipleship mentoring model.

The Didache is considered by some to be among the most elusive or bewildering of the extant Christian writings of the second century. The value of this document for the Christian faith is that, as the name implies, it stresses the role of catechism, or teaching in the church. Although the Didache was not likely written by any of the first century apostles, its composite nature is heavily dependent upon the Gospels, especially Matthew and Luke. There also appear in the document other strands of other apostolic writings such as Hebrews.³⁵

Considering the main components of a discipleship model such as evangelism, teaching, worship, and fellowship, it is plausible to mention that the Didache was an instrumental document about discipleship.

The contents may be divided into four parts, which most scholars agree were combined from separate sources by a later redactor. The first is the *Two Ways*, the Way of Life and the Way of Death (chapters 1-6). The second part is a ritual dealing with baptism, fasting, and communion (chs. 7-10). The third speaks of the ministry and how to deal with traveling prophets (chs. 11-15). And the final section (chapter 16) is a brief apocalypse.³⁶

These four subdivisions present the characteristics or the foundation of a discipleship model. Clear and explicit instructions are given to the members concerning the way they should treat one another. Referring to the teaching aspect of the Didache, Hughes brought a valuable statement. The value of the discipling task in the church is

³⁴Ibid., 105.

³⁵Hughes, *A Discipleship Mentoring Ministry*, 104.

³⁶Didache, accessed June 4, 2014, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Didache>.

implied where the Didache instructs the young Christian to see that no one leads him/her astray from this way of teaching, for such a person teaches you without regard for God.³⁷

Quoting the Apostolic Fathers, Hughes notes,

The clear insight for discipleship from the Didache is the efficacy of relational bonding through fellowship, teachings, and vigilance. The manual encourages the gathering of its members. Gather together frequently, seeking the things that benefit your souls, for all the time you have believed will be of no use to you if you are not found perfect in the last time.³⁸

Fourteenth through Sixteenth Century

Viewed as the state of being a disciple, discipleship during the fourteenth century has been depicted in the person and through the works of John Wycliffe. His writings laid the preparatory works leading to the Reformation. He put great emphasis on the teachings of the Scriptures. The doctrines, which had been taught by Wycliffe, continued for a time to spread. His followers or disciples were known as Wycliffites and Lollards. They carried the knowledge of the gospel throughout England, and to many other lands. It was through the writings of Wycliffe that John Huss, of Bohemia, was led to renounce many of the errors of Romanism and to enter upon the work of reform.

Later the Anabaptists consider discipleship as normative for the Christian life. It entails life lived beyond doctrine, a transformed life-style following the teachings and examples of Jesus Christ.³⁹ As for them, believers are to care for one another, and engage in mission to assist non believers. Discipleship has always been a distinctive mark of God's church.

³⁷Hughes, *A Discipleship Mentoring Ministry*, 106.

³⁸Ibid., 107.

³⁹Hughes, *A Discipleship Mentoring Ministry*, 165.

As mentioned in the introduction, there is no sufficient space to make a thorough study of the discipleship concept throughout all the centuries. However, it is crucial to mention that this concept has always been present in the history of the church. For example, to elucidate this point, one can read Mark Ellingsen in his book as he writes,

Samuel Wesley, the son of a Puritan clergyman, was a converted High Church Anglican but clearly a reformer with strategies of renewal much like that of the Pietists. He instituted small-group Bible studies in his parish during John's childhood. The father's influence on his fifteenth child seems evident not just in John's mature orientation towards small Christian nurture but also in his stubborn loyalty to the Church of England as well as its liturgy and polity.⁴⁰

Eighteenth Century, John Wesley and Beyond

Even though it could be felt and even seen in the church life, one needs to admit that discipleship was timidly expressed at times. It was until the eighteenth century that this concept reached a broader significance. This is characterized in the person and the works of John Wesley. Due to his tremendous contribution to church growth and renewal, some time has been put aside to consider the discipleship model that John Wesley had put in place in the eighteenth century.

From the beginning of his career, John Wesley displayed a convinced discipleship view. He understood very early that it is not in making converts but disciples that the church can fulfill the Great Commission. He clearly understood that making disciples is an important ministry of any Christian community.⁴¹ He created three strands of discipleship: Societies, classes, and bands so he could implement his discipleship model.

⁴⁰Mark Elleingsen, *Reclaiming Our Roots, An Inclusive Introduction to Church History*, vol. 2 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 183, 184.

⁴¹Matthaei, *Making Disciples: Faith Formation*, 17.

Hughes in his research shows without ambiguity that John Wesley showed a particular interest in the life of the new converts.

He wanted them to grow spiritually in their relationships with God. His great desire was to assimilate the new converts into the Christian fellowship through a discipleship program. He asserted that as soon as any of these new converts were so convinced of the truth, as to forsake sin and seek the gospel salvation, they immediately joined them together, took account of their names, advised them to watch over each other, and met these catechumens apart from the great congregation, that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them, and for them according to their several necessities.⁴²

The particular attention that Wesley brought to the new converts had a theological aspect rooted in the Bible. In this case it makes sense to go along again with Bryant.

Wesley understood this discipling process so perceptibly in the light of the scripture that his class structure was permeated with its insights. Aside from the veracity of Scriptures, the experience with the Moravians reinforced Wesley's beliefs in the theological ideal of building up the body of Christ.⁴³

The necessity of this spiritual progression among the new converts can be traced in most of Wesley's sermons but in particular in that on the new birth. He wants the new convert to have a new understanding of life by rejecting the old things and embracing the ones in harmony with the new decisions, they had made.

One of the key elements of discipleship is fellowship. Understanding the importance of that, Lester wrote,

The basic building blocks of Methodist fellowship were two kinds of small groups: class meetings and band meetings. Of the two, class meetings were the most prevalent and important. Class meetings were required of all members. Band meetings differed from class meetings in several aspects. John Wesley's original purpose had been to gather small, tightly bound groups of professors to assist each

⁴²Hughes, *A Discipleship Mentoring Ministry*, 187.

⁴³Donald Earl Bryant Sr., *Retaining and Engaging Members In The Life Of The Congregation* (D.Min Thesis, United Theological Seminary in Trotwood, OH, June 2007), 44, 45.

other toward the goal of sanctification. Participating in a band was optional for Methodists.⁴⁴

It is mostly accepted that these two fundamental blocks were very crucial in the building of the Wesleyan discipleship model.

Class meetings and band meetings were so vital in early Methodism that they need to be explored much deeper. They formed the basis of the discipleship mentoring model put in place by John Wesley. They were also means of sharing the Christian experience with those who did not know about God.

According to Bryant quoting Hardt, the class meetings were not a part of the original Methodist structure.

They rather began in 1742 in Bristol during a meeting in which Wesley and several members were discussing how to pay off the debt on the new preaching house. One of the members made the suggestion that they divide the society into groups of twelve who lived near each other and that designated persons collect one penny a week from them. This member further asked they put eleven of the poorest in his group. As he will call them weekly, if they cannot give anything, he will provide for them as well. And each other group leader will call on their neighbors weekly to receive what they give, and make up what is wanting.⁴⁵

The key element of a discipleship model in the class meetings is found in the selection of a group leader. A class leader provided oversight. David Watson has suggested that the class leader was the pivotal figure in early Methodist spirituality. Class leaders supervised the weekly class meeting and visited its members' homes.⁴⁶ As he enumerated the duty of class leaders, Bryant outlines a more detailed function of them in his thesis.

⁴⁴Ruth Lester, *Early Methodist Life And Spirituality* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2005), 258, 259.

⁴⁵Bryant, *Retaining and Engaging Members*, 45, 46.

⁴⁶Lester, *Early Methodist Life*, 258.

Each person was responsible for eleven other people. Class leaders recruited and kept attendance for the traveling preacher to review. The leaders were responsible to both the members and preacher. Wesley met once a quarter with every class on every circuit. The class meeting met on a weekly basis and structures were designed for those meetings. Those structures involved the participation and accountability of each person, members, and non members. They were responsible for class attendance, lesson review, personal accountability, and evangelism.⁴⁷

Nowadays, millions of people join the church. However, they are not really engaged in church's activities. They are not involved in any kind of ministry. They do not even know each other. There is no Christian bond that links them together. They do not study nor pray together. This is why they become so vulnerable. As one looks back to the experiences of the Christians in the eighteenth century, it is possible to revive this Christian fellowship. They have faced trials and tribulations but because they were bound together they have overcome. In the Wesleyan tradition, a living faith is a gift of God and requires cultivation and nurture in a community of faith.⁴⁸ Lester boldly expresses this view in his manual.

The dynamics of Methodism's small groups, class meetings especially, were the seedbed for much of their spiritual vitality. The basic elements of discipline, separation, and boundary-setting, combined with testimony and intense communion created a sort of fusion reactor of the spirit.⁴⁹

The primary objective of the church today as understood by John Wesley and outlined by Jesus is to make disciples who will become disciple-makers themselves. However, one must confess that there will be no disciples without training. Therefore, it is imperative that the church teaches its members how to have a good relationship with God and spread the good news.

⁴⁷Bryant, *Retaining and Engaging Members*, 46.

⁴⁸Matthaei, *Making Disciples: Faith Formation*, 55.

⁴⁹Lester, *Early Methodist Life*, 259.

Conclusion

Despite its undeniable apparent success, the Wesleyan discipleship model was not perfect. Bryant in his thesis comes up with this argument.

Even with the class meeting of Wesley, it is clearly seen that the work of the church is still a work in progress. Through the evolution of systems, not one was found flawless. These systems proved not to be cure alls and not the sole answer for retaining and engaging members.⁵⁰

In our modern times it is impossible to reproduce the Wesleyan discipleship model and expect the same results. The church needs to make all necessary adjustments while they put in place a Christ-based discipleship model for the new converts. They were discrepancies in Wesley's but, since it was Christ-centered, it has successfully worked. When all realize that discipleship is the heart of the Great Commission, plans will be made so discipleship can be at the forefront of all the activities of the church.

Theological Foundations

To be viable, a discipleship program for new converts should have a theological grounding, which depicts a clear understanding of salvation and the implications of its components in the life of the new convert. As long as sin exists, God's people including the new convert will have the need for divine salvation. Because sin creates separation between people and God, the source of salvation, new converts have to acknowledge their powerlessness and claim the help of God to overcome the enslaving power of sin.

This section of the project has dealt with two main theological themes, soteriology and ecclesiology. There has not been an exhaustive study of these terms. The purpose is to show the importance of their interrelation, and how the new convert can

⁵⁰Bryant, *Retaining and Engaging Members*, 47.

inherit eternal life at Jesus' return as they are getting ready and remain connected to Christ's body. To help the new converts grasp a better understanding of these two topics, the works of two theologians, John Wesley on Salvation and Jason Vickers on Church, have been studied in the light of this endeavor.

Soteriology and Ecclesiology

The sole purpose of accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior is to have everlasting life or salvation. However, as we consider Jesus' teaching regarding salvation, it is easily understood that salvation is not a one-time or a point action. It is clearly stated in the word of God that the one who perseveres until the end shall have eternal life. Thus, the thought, once saved always saved is not biblical and has no theological ground.

As per this consideration, it makes no doubt that soteriology plays a critical role in the lives of those who called themselves Christians, in particular in the life of the new converts. In other words, to be a disciple, the new convert needs to know and understand the scope of their decision to walk with Jesus. It is interesting to note that the place or location designed or chosen by Christ for the ongoing teaching of this critical biblical doctrine is none other than the church.

John Wesley as Theologian

For many years, John Wesley was given a rather romantic image as Father of Methodism and the man with the warm heart while his theology was largely ignored. Beginning with George Croft Cell's *The Rediscovery of John Wesley*, John Wesley's theology began to catch the interest of scholars. Today his position as a theologian is generally recognized. But Wesley wrote no systematic theology; rather, he expressed his theological convictions as the situation demanded. Wesley divides theology into two

branches, speculative divinity, with speculative faith as correlative, and practical divinity, with faith as trust, confidence, and the life of God in man.⁵¹

Wesley and Salvation

The Wesleyan theology grants a great importance to salvation. In other words, John Wesley presents salvation as the entire redeeming work of God in the life of an individual. He considers salvation as the end of the Christian religion and the means to obtain it is faith through a life of holiness.

Wesley builds all his principles and doctrines on Scripture and common sense. Consequently, according to the analogy of faith and the grand scheme of doctrines in the Scriptures, he subscribes to the three grand, essential, and fundamental scriptural doctrines of original sin, justification by faith, and sanctification translated as inward and outward holiness. These are the central doctrines in Wesley's theology.⁵²

The development of a Christ-based discipleship model for the new converts needs to convey a clear teaching about salvation. In the *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, Ivan T. Blazen helps understand the global aspect of salvation.

Salvation is the universal theme of Scripture. All other major themes are subdivision or explications of it. The form of salvation varies, but the underlying structure is the same: God visits his people and delivers them from problems or powers that imperil their existence. God is viewed as dynamically involved with the deliverance of the human race. This is so much the case that the word Savior is not only coordinated with the name God, but becomes a definition of it, a name for God.⁵³

To help catch Wesley's theological emphasis on salvation, Borgen states,

These truths are brought to light by the gospels. Whether it is said that these two heads of doctrine include the essential doctrines of original sin, justification by

⁵¹Ole E. Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments* (Zurich, Switzerland: Publishing House of the United Methodist Church, 1972), 36.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 42.

⁵³George W. Reid, general editor, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, vol. 12. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 271.

faith and sanctification; or, as Wesley says another place: Our main doctrines, which include all the rest, are three—that of Repentance, of Faith, and Holiness – matters not so much for Wesley. When he speaks of God or any person within the Godhead, it is always seen in relation to God’s love and redemption of man; and when he speaks of the way of salvation it is always seen in the context of the atonement and the ongoing work of salvation through the Holy Spirit. Consequently, these doctrines form the essential core of Wesley’s theology and, as such, can properly be deemed fundamental.⁵⁴

Blazen in his comment on salvation wrote that Wesley, who lived in the eighteenth century, was Arminian in his theological stance. The wellsprings for his concept of salvation lay in view on the atonement.⁵⁵ That view is also supported by Borgen in his book, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*. Wesley’s theology emerges essentially as a theology of the ordosalutis... God’s work in redeeming man; man’s acceptance of God’s grace and the new life of faith, the atonement, Christ’s life, death and sacrifice are of essential here.⁵⁶

As long as sin exists, God’s people including the new convert will have the need for divine salvation. Because sin creates separation between us and God, the new converts have to acknowledge their powerlessness and claim the help of God to overcome the enslaving power of sin. The new converts need a new heart and right spirit. The renewal of the heart plays a crucial role in Wesley’s theology. Gregory Clapper notes that Wesley’s emphasis on the affections and the heart makes a strong case for seeing the renewing of the heart was the most essential element of Wesley’s vision of Christianity.

⁵⁴Ibid., 43.

⁵⁵Reid, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 306.

⁵⁶Borgen, *John Wesley on the Sacraments*, 44.

In his sermon on Original Sin, Wesley says that the great end of religion is to renew our hearts in the image of God.⁵⁷

The new converts have been taught of the importance of repentance, forgiveness, renewal, and sanctification in order to live the new heart experience. Clapper making echo of Albert Outler's comment on the renewing of the heart writes that the renewal of the heart is the axial theme of Wesley's soteriology. Almost every thinker who has studied Wesley agrees that soteriology is at the center of his theology.⁵⁸ Living in a world devastated by sin and dominated by evil powers, the new converts need to know the provisions made for them through the plan of salvation in their daily walk with Jesus. The solution of sin lies in a new relationship with God, a new assurance before God, and a new life from God through Christ who strengthens us.

Salvation has diverse components, such as justification and righteousness, reconciliation, adoption, repentance and conversion, sanctification, and so on. To help the new converts grasp the meaning of this biblical doctrine, emphasis has been put on justification and sanctification. Indeed, John Wesley, in his soteriology puts great accent on these two components with faith as common denominator. In general, right after their baptism, the new converts face many challenges. As per instructions received during evangelistic series, they want and make effort to live a sinless life, which is always impossible. The problem is that they try to make it on their own. Special teachings on salvation have been given to help new converts not to be fearful but rather to count on Jesus' merits to fight and overcome evil.

⁵⁷Gregory S. Clapper, *The Renewal of the Heart Is The Mission Of The Church: Wesley's Heart Religion In The Twenty-First Century* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2010), 27.

⁵⁸Ibid.

The teaching of the two components cited above has faith as corollary. Thomas C. Oden gives a simple but meaningful definition of the term.

Faith is a fully trusting response to grace. Faith is the disposition of the whole heart, mind, strength, will to receive grace joyfully. In apostolic preaching, faith is the sole condition of salvation. Those who have faith are saved. The Christian faith is not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ, a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection.⁵⁹

Justification

New converts have been not only instructed of the importance of justification, but also understood that justification is a gift of God. It is just needed to be accepted by faith. They have discovered that justification is already completed on the cross. It is not something for them to complete. Once new converts have a clear theological view of the doctrine of justification, they will be more determined to continue the spiritual journey regardless the constant appearance of sin in their lives. Commenting on Wesley's teaching of justification, Oden states,

The plain scriptural notion of justification is pardon, forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father whereby, for the sake of the propitiation made by the blood of his Son, he shows forth his righteousness by the remission of the sins that are past. To those justified by faith, God will not impute sin to his condemnation.⁶⁰

How rejoicing and encouraging it is for the new converts to know that all their past sins in thought, word, and deed are covered and blotted out; shall not be remembered or mentioned against them any more than if they had not been. This idea is well expressed by the apostle Paul in the second book of Corinthians, chapter five and verse

⁵⁹Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 192.

⁶⁰Ibid., 199.

seventeen. Justification is thus a forensic declaration, a verdict credited in our favor, God's act for us.

Sanctification

The second part of John Wesley's more limited sense of salvation is called sanctification. Justification is what God does for us through his Son. Sanctification is what God works in us by his Spirit. It is the immediate fruit of justification. Wesley equates sanctification to holiness. John Wesley urged that all preachers in his connection of spiritual formation make a point of teaching the way of holiness to believers constantly, strongly and explicitly, and that all class leaders should be attentive to this doctrine and continually agonize for its experiential appropriation.⁶¹

Writing on this biblical doctrine, Blazen states,

Sanctification, or holiness, is one of the most frequent, important, and all-embracing concepts in Scripture. It has to do with God and man; with relationships, worship, and morals; with every period of life, whether past, present, or future; and with every element of the world, including times and places, objects and rituals. It is so significant that believers are admonished to strive for holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Heb.12:14).⁶²

Through sound biblical teaching of sanctification, the new converts have realized that they are set apart for God. They cannot be of the world any longer. At this level, the new converts are to seek for holiness as it is written in Leviticus 19:2: You shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy. Sanctification becomes avail and possible to the new converts by virtue of their new relationship with God. Holiness produces a union between the believer and Christ. As they become united to Christ, the new converts should not let

⁶¹Ibid., 311.

⁶²Reid, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 295.

sin reign in their mortal bodies; rather, they should yield their members to God as weapons of righteousness.

As per John Wesley,

By sanctification one was saved from sin's power and root and restored to God's image. Sanctification had as its outcome, even in this life, the perfection of the believer, entire sanctification. For Wesley, perfection was not a static, but a dynamic reality, not a perfected perfection but a perfecting perfection. Wesley saw perfection as overcoming pride, self-will, evil tempers and thoughts, and restoring the mind of Christ. For him, entire sanctification was love excluding sin; love filling the heart, taking up the whole capacity of the soul.⁶³

This Christ-based discipleship model has clearly stated for the new converts that sanctification is a constant movement forward. It is a continuous action for the Christian. In other words, sanctification for the new believer is a journey without end. There may be fulfillment, but not finality; further advances are always to be made.

Ecclesiology

Jesus makes no more mention of an explicit ecclesiology than does the Old Testament. To be sure, the New Testament puts the word *ekklesia* in his mouth, but this should probably be attributed to the primitive Christian community (Mt 16:18; 18:18). Upon becoming disciples of Jesus, new converts are required to live up to the standards set by the Master. Jean-Yves Lacoste clarifies this in his writings,

Jesus also called disciples and determined the manner in which they should commit themselves to follow him. The disciples who were called were those who accepted the three essential signs of the kingship of God: a fundamental openness to a God of goodness and mercy, the only source of life and of a future; the radical practice of the new justice and of the commandment of love, including reconciliation with and love of enemies; and the willingness to sacrifice oneself even to the point of death.⁶⁴

⁶³Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*, 306.

⁶⁴Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 301.

When we study the structure of the early church we discover that the church was seen as a ritual assembly. That makes us understand that the converts were not an isolate group of people but rather a community of believers devoted in serving the Lord. New Testament accounts show that those who believed in Jesus began to meet in assemblies immediately after Easter. In Acts this movement is linked to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and to Peter's Pentecost speech, which brought about the conversion of a large number of people.

Acts 2:42 sets out the ideal model of the primitive Christian community, whose essential characteristics are the teaching of the apostles, the breaking of bread, and prayer, as well as certain forms of common life of a charitable nature. The image of these assemblies or meetings most particularly suggests the use of the term *ekklesia*.⁶⁵

Despite Christ's radical teaching about his church, several people continue to undermine its importance. The new converts need to know much more about the church. In fact, when he was on earth, Jesus was not a lone ranger. Ronald J. Sider gives a good description of the church that he views as the visibility of God's kingdom. Christ did not travel around the countryside declaring God's forgiveness to isolated hermits. Jesus formed a new society. He gathered a new community of forgiven disciples, who challenged evil and proclaimed the gospel.⁶⁶

The church is a divine institution established by Christ for the welfare of the humankind. Christ was intentional when he laid the foundation of the New Testament church. From the foremost, Christ began to gather to himself a number of disciples, and also gave them memorable teachings about the manner of life they were meant to live.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ronald, J. Sider, *Good News and Good Works: A Theology of the Whole Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1983), 57.

Church and salvation are intertwined to bring human salvation to its completeness. In other words, the church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of sinners. This assertion is in line with Kurt K. Hendel's statement.

Luther clearly affirms that there is no salvation outside the church. It is either explicitly or implicitly articulated in much of his theological corpus. Nowhere is it stated more clearly than in a normative text of the Reformation movement, a text that ultimately was included among the Lutheran confessional writings, namely, the Large Catechism.⁶⁷

Vickers and the Church

Regardless her limits and weaknesses, the new convert must acknowledge the existence and importance of the church. Jason E. Vickers underlines this point eloquently in *Minding the Good Ground*.

Those who love the church deeply will want to insist that, whatever her imperfections, the church really is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. We will maintain that, whatever her shortcomings might be, the church really is a light to the world, the spotless bride of Christ, and a royal priesthood descended from David. We will insist that someone is always preaching the pure word of God and duly administering the sacraments. After all, we will say, God will not be without a witness in the world.⁶⁸

New converts generally come from different religious backgrounds that at times undermine the importance of the church. Several people say that they do not need the church. All they need is a good relationship with God, which they can find at their homes. It thus makes no doubt that doing ecclesiology in this context is not something easy these days. This legitimate concern is well expressed by Vickers in his writings. In an age of anxiety, we need to be particularly wary of doing ecclesiology through a

⁶⁷Kurt K. Hendel, "No Salvation Outside the Church In Light of Luther's Dialectic of the Hidden and Revealed God," *Currents in Theology and Mission*, August 1, 2008: 1.

⁶⁸Jason E. Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground: A Theology for Church Renewal* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 26.

megaphone. It is bad enough that we are deeply worried about the church that we are afraid for the church future.⁶⁹

Although this situation is getting increasingly alarming, we must still do ecclesiology. Vickers not only points the problem but he also proposes a solution.

Among our growing anxiety about the church, we ought to be doing ecclesiology on our knees. Far from shouting at one another, we need to enter into a round of prayerful reflection on what the church is called by God to be and to do in the world. The proper way to begin this prayerful reflection is not by naming what is wrong with the church or by making a case for how to put things right, and we certainly shouldn't begin by deciding who is to blame. Rather, we should begin by reflecting prayerfully on what sort of community the church is.⁷⁰

Most challenges encountered in or outside the church today are caused by the fact that people are ignorant about the scope of the church. Some come to the church with the assumption that all their needs will be met while they overlook the responsibilities that becoming part of the church brings. To help the new converts get a summing up idea of the church, this section has put accent on the nature and mission of the church.

Nature of the Church

Describing the nature of the church, Carter cites two elements for a true ecclesiology. According to him,

Christology and pneumatology constitute the basis of ecclesiology. The church has two foci from which it operates. In other words, the church is founded on what has been accomplished through Christ, also what is being accomplished by the Holy Spirit. The church built on Christ without regard to the Holy Spirit is static and objective in its nature but when it relies on the Holy Spirit, it is dynamic and subjective.⁷¹

⁶⁹Ibid., 21.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Charles W. Carter, general editor, *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1983), 592.

On his part, Vickers suggests thinking about the nature of the church in light of the Pentecostal origins of the church. Doing so will give a macro description of the church in the Nicene Creed, in Protestant Confessions of faith, and in the New Testament in a way that does not lead either to denial of or despair over the church's collective sins and failures. He continues his explanations saying that the understanding of the nature of the church in the light of the church's Pentecostal origins puts these descriptions of the church into proper theological perspective.⁷² The church is thus seen as icon of the Trinity.

At their very entrance, the new converts should have in mind a clear vision of the nature of the church. As stated by Vickers,

Understanding the nature of the church in light of the church's Pentecostal origins enables us truly to attribute holiness, unity, catholicity, and apostolicity to the church. Similarly, it enables us rightly to attribute to the church the exemplary qualities suggested by the New Testament metaphors for the church. We can do these things because Pentecost reminds us that the church came into existence originally and has existed continuously ever since because the Spirit is present in and to the church.⁷³

Once the new converts know this crucial description of the church, instead of being discouraged by what goes wrong, they will remain steadfast in church to become effective Disciples under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The term *ekklesia* taken alone is not sufficient to express the nature of the church. Raoul Dederen elucidates this view in his article.

The common existence of believers in Christ as his body, bride, temple, and people gives a sharper and richer picture of the nature and scope of the church than can be drawn on the basis of the term *ekklesia* alone. They contain a wealth

⁷²Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground*, 36.

⁷³Ibid., 36-37.

of viewpoint and possibilities of expression for elucidating more fully than ekklesia can the place and significance of the church in the New Testament.⁷⁴

With a clear understanding of the nature of the church in mind, the new converts are getting ready to know the mission of the church.

Mission of the Church

As the body of Christ, the church has not been called to exist as an end, but to fulfill God's purpose. It has to carry on the Lord's ministry in the world, to do what Jesus would do if he were still on earth. Looking from a Godward point of view, Carter writes,

The purpose of the church is to glorify God (Eph.3:10; 1 Peter 2:9). But from the standpoint of the church's life in the world, we may consider the following purposes: to preach and teach the Word, to provide worship and administer the sacraments, to enrich the fellowship of believers, to provide nurture and training of new persons for the mission of the church, to engage in evangelism and the mission enterprise, extending the fellowship into an ever-growing number of persons, to engage in loving and helping service through social concern and involvement, and to exemplify, teach, and promote ethical righteousness.⁷⁵

Vickers summarizes all these functions of the church cited above in a twofold mission of the church. Beginning at Pentecost and continuing across the century to the present day, we can observe the Holy Spirit enabling and empowering the church to do two things. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit is ever at work in the church, enabling her to worship God. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the church acknowledges and celebrates the rule and reign of God over all of creation in a spirit of humility, joy, and thanksgiving. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is ever at work in the church, enabling

⁷⁴Reid, *Handbook of the Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 549.

⁷⁵*A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology*, vol. 2, 614.

her to bear witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. With the help of the Holy Spirit, the church witnesses to Jesus Christ in word and in deed.⁷⁶

The primary task of the church is to worship God. We are living a secular world where worship is not really appreciated. Worship should be the first basic element the new converts must be aware of in their journey with Jesus. As they worship the Creator, they bring glory to God, listen to the proclamation of the Word, and participate in the sacraments. Vickers in his manual even cites a few reasons for worshipping.

We need to worship Jesus as one who is fully divine, and we need to obey his commands to preach the gospel and to care for the poor. We need to celebrate and give thanks that Jesus became incarnate and dwelt among us.⁷⁷

Another key task of the church consists in making disciples. This is the final commission Jesus gave to his disciples before ascending to heaven. This constitutes the job description of the church and by extension of every member, and of every new convert. Throughout the Bible God is portrayed as a God of sending of mission. Thus, as they become disciples, the new converts have the responsibility to share the good news of Jesus Christ with those they are in contact. Every new convert ought to know that God has chosen to depend on the church to forward his work of salvation. And to enable us to accomplish this task, he promises to pour out the Holy Spirit upon us.

As we study thoroughly Jesus' great commission to the disciples, another mission of the church is expressed unequivocally. This is the mission of teaching. In other words, the edification of the new believers or new converts is another mission of the church. The new converts need to grow up in Christ before becoming efficient disciples or witnesses. Teaching must play a vital role in the life of the church if we want to witness effectively.

⁷⁶Vickers, *Minding the Good Ground*, 53.

⁷⁷Ibid., 67.

In fact, the instruction of the new converts is not something optional but a requirement of Jesus himself.

Conclusion

To become not simply church members but Christ's disciples, new converts need to recognize that God's act enabling us to have eternal life has been made once and for all. However, at the same token they have to understand that salvation is a continuous process of accepting and living in permanent relationship with Jesus. And the church is the center established by God to live this salvific reality. Vickers with clarity explains this fact.

In light of the two natures of Jesus Christ, the church's nature and mission involves both welcoming all who are broken and waiting patiently with the broken for the Holy Spirit to bind up their wounds in Christ. Brokenness is fully expected. But so is healing. This is truly good news.⁷⁸

⁷⁸Ibid., 89.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Flowing from the problem statement, this project is designed to get the new converts involve in church activities as soon as they accept Christ as their personal Savior. Personal observation and continuous complaints of church leaders about the non-participation of the newly baptized in the church's life have inspired this endeavor. This non-involvement is mostly cause of lack of maturity in Christian affairs and a poor knowledge in their relationship with Christ. The problem being identified, a plan of action through a Christ-based discipleship model was put in place in order to shape and transform the new converts from church members to Disciples.

Problem Statement

Maranatha Seventh-day Adventist Church located in Newark, New Jersey has been facing the challenge of simply making members for years. The church has failed to assimilate those who have been evangelized. The church too often equates baptism of new converts to the end of their spiritual journey, and overlooks Jesus' command of making disciples. As a result, the percentage of new converts leaving the church shortly after baptism due to lack of Christian maturity is considerably high (over 70%). The non-involvement of new converts in church activities due to lack of maturity in their relationship with Christ creates the necessity for a Christ-based discipleship model that is

biblically rooted, historically sound, and theologically relevant for new converts in Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Hypothesis

If Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church embraces this Christ-based discipleship model, new converts, shortly after their baptism, will know that they are committed to Christ. They will be able to establish the difference between church membership and Disciples. As a result, through solid biblical teaching, they will be confident and knowledgeable of church matters and become involved in different ministries. After the implementation of this program, the expectation is to see a great percentage of new converts getting involved in church activities and witnessing for the Lord. It is worth mentioning that new converts are not the only ones that refuse their collaboration. Their positive and joyful participation might constitute an incentive for the church at large that will move them from simply church members to Disciples.

Objectives

The main objective of this ministry program is to help the new converts to become active participants in the church's life right after their baptisms and so on. In other terms, this project aims at enhancing the participation of the new converts at a substantial percentage in the ministries of the church so they can become effective Disciples. Jesus' mandate is to make disciples. When a person becomes a

Christian, the most basic need is no longer food, or water or shelter. The most basic need becomes the commitment to follow Christ; to be a disciple.¹

The purpose of this doctor of ministry program is to develop a Christ-based discipleship model that can help every new convert build a good, constant, personal, and spiritual relationship with Jesus. If Christ's assignment found in Mathew 28: 19 is well understood and put into application, it makes no doubt that the discipleship process begins with the teaching of the neophytes. In addition to the teaching aspect, the other components of a discipleship model, such as the study of the Word of God, the fellowship and fraternal communion, and mission will give the new converts great insights of how to remain committed to Christ in order to live a life of service.

Research Design

The context of this project is Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church, 890 South Orange Avenue, Newark, New Jersey. The participation of new converts in the church's life is mostly insignificant. This non-involvement in church activities due to a lack of maturity in their relationship with Christ leads most of the time to their leaving out a few months later after baptism. The objective of this project is to teach them how to grow in their relation with Christ.

Research Instruments

For the implementation of the project, information and data were gathered at Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist church by different methods, such as personal observation, questionnaires, pastoral visits, and surveys. A qualitative research method

¹Jane Thayer, *Teaching for Discipleship: Strategies for Transformational Learning* (Unpublished, 2009), 4.

was used for data collection to design, implement, and evaluate the project. A pre and post test in a form of questionnaire was administered to each participant at the beginning and end of the project. Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study. They do not bring individuals to a lab, nor do they typically send out instruments for individuals to complete.²

Data Triangulation

To establish the validity of the qualitative research method utilized in this project, data triangulation approach was adopted. Three different sources of collected data were considered, a survey (questionnaire), a 700-word essay from ten active participants, and face-to-face interviews with eight active participants. Four categories and coding were used, Loving (L), Understanding (U), Ministering (M), and Equipping (E). Data triangulation involves the use of different sources of data/information. A key strategy is to categorize each group or type of stakeholder for the program that you are evaluating.³

The project consisted of eight two-hour sessions and was conducted at Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church:

- 1) General Introduction on Discipleship,
- 2) Christ and Discipleship,
- 3) The Holy Spirit and Discipleship,
- 4) God's Word and Discipleship,
- 5) Salvation and Discipleship,

²John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2009), 175.

³Dr. J. Baston, "Data Planning and Analysis" (Class Notes, United Theological Seminary), 2.

- 6) Prayer and Discipleship,
- 7) Church and Discipleship, and
- 8) Stewardship and Discipleship.

These modules were presented on the ladder of three basic characteristics of discipleship, which are Teaching, Mentoring (Coaching), and Witnessing. Each presentation followed a simple format (See Appendix C). The first thirty minutes were reserved for devotion (singing, reading of a short biblical passage, and praying) and a quick review of the material previously studied. Forty-five minutes were allotted to the introduction, and development of the new topic, twenty minutes for group discussion; fifteen minutes for questions. Finally, ten minutes were set aside for conclusion and summary, and closing prayer. A theme song was chosen in the opening day by the participants.

The Participants

The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question. This does not necessarily suggest random sampling or selection of a large number of participants and sites, as typically found in quantitative research.⁴ There were two types of participants in this program. The targeted group (active participants) was selected among the new converts, those who were baptized for the past eighteen months. On December 6 and 7 of 2013, a special program was organized and prepared for about thirty-nine new converts. Their participation was tremendous and thirty-two of them registered for the Discipleship seminar. The age group varied from fifteen to forty-two years including men

⁴Creswell, *Research Design*, 178.

and women. The second group of participants (adherent) included the leaders of several ministries in the church in order to facilitate the participation of the new converts in church activities. Nine small discussion panel groups were formed in order to facilitate a one-on-one participation. Each discussion panel group contained two new converts and a ministry leader seating as the group Leader or mentor.

Measurement

The participation of the new converts in church affairs has served as a measurement tool for evaluating the project.

- 1) In-session participation was conducted by the facilitator during the seminar
- 2) The Mentors (Ministry Leaders) have provided with a report in regard to the new convert's involvement in ministries
- 3) A 700-word essay was collected from ten active participants, and eight face-to-face interviews were conducted in lieu of the 700-word essay because these participants were incapable to write.

Same information was requested for both means of collection. Both Essay writers and interviewees had to express/ answer seven same ideas/ questions about

- 1) The eight topics studied
- 2) What love means for a disciple
- 3) Why is it critical to study the Word of God
- 4) Their intent to minister to others
- 5) Their willingness for continuous training
- 6) Their eagerness to become a disciple
- 7) Their comments and suggestions

Questions two to five were used for triangulation purpose; one and six for evaluation reason; seven for possible way of improvement in the curriculum.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

The focus of this doctoral project was Transforming New Converts from Members to Disciples. Generally, most new converts leave the church shortly after their entrance, due to lack of maturity in church affairs and knowledge of Christ. The issue was real; they have been talking about it for long. However, no one seemed determined to tackle it. Indeed, there has been no formal attempt to quell this problem until an associate pastor for discipleship was named. The project was implemented in the context of Maranatha Seventh-Day Adventist church situated at 890 South Orange Avenue, Newark, New Jersey.

Being intentional in doing evangelism, a new approach was adopted in the life of the church. This technique first put great emphasis on a pre-assimilation process where the church makes itself known in the community through felt-needs programs. Secondly, after new believers have joined the church, it embraced an assimilation phase to facilitate their involvement and their commitment to Christ. The third step, post-assimilation, set the goal to create what experts call production evangelism—the believer becomes disciple maker. As stated by Kidder in his book, *The Big Four*, we need to equip and

motivate the laity to do great things for God. A growing church is not a one-person show.¹

On December 7, 2013, a special dinner was organized on behalf of the new converts that had participated at the training weekend on discipleship. A registration form was passed for an eight-week seminar on discipleship. From the thirty-nine new believers present at the event, thirty-two registered to attend the program. After remittance of the consent form one week prior to the launching (See Appendix A), the number dropped to twenty-three and then passed at eighteen on the very start day. The focus group was composed of fifteen adults (nine women and six men), and of three adolescents (two males, one female). In addition, another group comprised of nine ministry leaders (Sabbath school, Visitation Team, Prayer ministry, Fellowship Group, Usher, Literature Distribution, Bible study, Youth and Recreation Group, Teaching, and Music) attended the entire seminar. From the twenty-seven participants, only the eighteen new converts were part of the project under study.

Before officially starting this project, a support group for the new converts was created, a special training class on how to deal with new converts was conducted for the old members. Four sermons on love, the importance for Christians to bear fruit, and human relationships were preached consecutively to the entire body. The objectives were to make the new converts proud of being a Christian, know more about Christ, and become disciples.

As part of the requirements, three professional associates were selected to assist through the project completion based on their availability and professional expertise.

¹S. Joseph Kidder, *The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011), 54.

Most contacts were made by phone and texting. Eight context associates were chosen and participated actively in all the meetings leading to the launching of the project. A special session was convened with all the context associates prior to the start of the project.

A folder of material including information on the doctoral program and outline of the project proposal was given to all professional and context associates. They all fully cooperated and contributed to the realization of the project.

Collection of Data

Previously stated in chapter four, the qualitative research method was used in this project. It is qualitative in the sense that it involves the examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of finding meanings and patterns of relationships. Data were collected at Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist church by the following ways: personal observation, questionnaires, pastoral visits, and surveys.

Each active participant in the project was administered a pretest at the beginning and a post-test at the end. The overall questions covered three specific areas in five categories. The first area was Generalities on discipleship to assess the understanding of the new converts on discipleship. The second area was Personal Process of Discipleship and the third put accent on Community Process of Discipleship. Area two, consisted of three different sets of questions (Loving, Understanding, and Ministering), and area three of one set (Equipping). (See Appendix B for list of questions)

The Project and Implementation

The project consisted of eight two-hour sessions and was conducted at Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church:

- 1) General introduction on Discipleship
- 2) Christ and Discipleship
- 3) The Holy Spirit and Discipleship
- 4) God's Word and Discipleship
- 5) Salvation and Discipleship
- 6) Prayer and Discipleship
- 7) Church and Discipleship
- 8) Stewardship and Discipleship

These modules were presented on the ladder of three basic characteristics of discipleship, which are Teaching, Mentoring (Coaching), and Witnessing on the following dates and time:

Session I: April 19, 2014 (3:00 – 5:00 P.M.)

Pre-Survey or Pre-Test on Discipleship

General introduction on Discipleship

Lecture on the Biblical, Historical, and
Theological Background of Discipleship.

The project officially started on April 19, 2014 at three o'clock in the afternoon. It was an awesome moment expected for about five months. The participants were very excited and the fellowship hall of the church contained thirty people; the presenter, the senior pastor, and the first elder of the church; eighteen new converts (active participants), and nine ministry leaders (adherent participants). After devotion, an informal but friendly presentation was made, and the pretest (See appendix B) was administered to the active participants.

The introduction and historical, biblical, and theological foundations of discipleship were explored on that day. The small group panel discussion was followed by a series of questions and answers; the first gathering was concluded as indicated in the daily format with the closing prayer of the senior pastor.

Session II: April 26, 2014 (3:00 – 5:00 P.M.)

Christ and Discipleship

The second gathering began with the devotional part and a brief review of the previous subject. This lecture has helped the new convert understand that they have committed to Christ who is their perfect model. They need to remain faithful as they accomplish the work of a true disciple until Christ's return. They do not become mature as soon as they accepted Christ as their personal Savior. The journey of a disciple is a lifetime experience.² The participants have also discovered that Christ's invitations, follow me (Mt 8:22) and Abide in me (Jn 15:4), were not temporary but rather permanent. They have also understood that each person functions and grows best in union with Christ. If they wish to bear fruit as required in the Word of God, they must remain connected to Christ, the Fruit-Bearer.

Session III: May 3, 2014 ((3:00 – 5:00 P.M.)

The Holy Spirit and Discipleship

The third meeting took place in a much debated environment. Participants began to ask questions on the previous topic even before the devotional moment. In this segment the new convert has learned that they are not alone in their spiritual journey.

²Jane Thayer, *Teaching for Discipleship: Strategies for Transformational Learning* (Unpublished, 2009), 4.

Christ has promised a Comforter that is the Holy Spirit. He will guide and teach them all they need to know for their salvation. In concluding the great commission with these words, I am with you always, Christ is providing his unlimited authority and his presence to assure the success of our mission of making disciples.³

Session IV: May 10, 2014 (3:00 – 5:00 P.M.)

God's Word and Discipleship

The fourth presentation started with an inspiring devotion led by the senior pastor. After a quick review of the previous topic, much attention was directed toward God's love letter, which is the Bible. This lecture has taught the new convert to understand their need for studying the Bible. Without a clear comprehension of God's word, it will be very difficult to be effective representatives of Christ. This critical point is supported by Greg Ogden in his manual. Along with Jesus Christ as both our foundation and the builder on it, the written Word of God is fundamentally connected to establishing and laying foundations in a believer's life.⁴ The new convert has also learned how to begin studying the Bible. The practical part of this study has been enhanced in the small group panel discussion where some key verses (Jn 5:39; Ps 119: 11, 105) constituted the point of interest.

Session V: May 24, 2014 (3:00 – 5:00 P.M.)

Salvation and Discipleship

On the fifth day, accent has been put on a fundamental doctrinal theme, which is salvation. This lecture has been designed to help the new convert overcome the guilty

³Ibid., 10.

⁴Greg Ogden, *Unfinished Business: Returning The Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 147.

feelings of sin and that his/her salvation is guaranteed in Christ. Jesus has already paid the price of their redemption through his sacrificial death. The participants have discovered that salvation is not something that money can buy. It is a gift from God, but we need to accept it. In addition, several attendees testified that was the first time they knew that Jesus means Savior. In sharing human suffering Jesus has become the pioneer and source of salvation to all who follow him (Heb 2:10; 5:9).⁵ As long as the new convert remains connected to Christ, their salvation is assured.

Session VI: May 31, 2014 (3:00 – 5:00 P.M.)

Prayer and Discipleship

During the sixth gathering, more time was devoted to prayer. There is no spiritual life without prayer. Prayer is our connection with God, our strength, and our bridge to heaven.⁶ In this presentation, the new convert was taught the importance of prayer, which is the means of communication with God. They have discovered they are not called to serve a distant God, but rather a God who hears and answers prayers. The participants were convinced they need to imitate Christ in every aspect of his life. Like the twelve, not only do they need to ask Jesus to teach them to pray (Lk 11:1), but also they are exhorted to lead a life of prayer like their Master (Mk 1:35). Three times, the presentation was interrupted by special and specific moments of prayer. It was a remarkable day. Format/Handout for this study can be found in appendix C.

⁵Handbook of the Seventh-Day Adventist Theology, 271.

⁶Ellen G. White, *Power of Prayer* (New York, NY: TEACH Services, Inc., 1994), iii.

Session VII: June 7, 2014 (3:00 – 5:00 P.M.)

Church and Discipleship

The seventh topic studied in this seminar was Church and Discipleship. After devotion and a brief review of the previous subject, accent was put on this particular theme. Some people say all they really need is Christ, but not the church. This lecture has reminded the new convert of the importance of being part of Christ's body. Church is the place chosen by God for their spiritual growth and maturation and their preparation for heavenly dwelling.

They have also learned that the church is not the walls but rather the gathering of those that have been called by the Lord. Scope and nature of the church have been also considered. Seen as a body and a bride, the church was compared to the ark of Noah. As such, participants were exhorted not to forsake their assemblies. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.⁷

Session VIII: June 14, 2014 ((3:00 – 5:00 P.M.)

Stewardship and Discipleship – Project Review – Post-test

The eighth and last gathering was distinctive. There was no revision of the prior topic due to time limitation. In this presentation the new convert has learned that God is the owner of all. As such, they are only stewards and must be faithful ones. They are to consecrate their time, talents, money (tithes and offerings), and their bodies to the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷Heb 10:25 (NIV).

After this lecture, a brief review of the entire project was given. The participants expressed their satisfaction and the presenter thanked all for their faithful and continuous presence. The seminar concluded with the administration of the post-test. However, a 700-word essay was to be collected a week later.

The great surprise of the day was the invitation to a special dinner organized by the support group for the new converts on behalf of all the participants!

Analysis of Data

Qualitative data consist of words and observations, not numbers. As with all data, analysis and interpretation are required to bring order and understanding.⁸ The data in the study have been drawn from the active participants, the new converts. Each active participant was given a pre-test survey at the initiation of the project. A 700-word essay was collected from them the week following the seminar. However, eight of them for not being able to write were given face-to-face interviews. Finally, a posttest survey administered to the active participants concluded the project on June 14, 2014.

The pre and posttest surveys had two parts. The first four questions were used to test how knowledgeable the new converts were about discipleship, and also to evaluate any progress after attending the discipleship seminar. The twelve other questions were related to the four basic elements of discipleship, which are Love, Understanding the Word of God, Ministering, and Equipping. Those questions were actually the analysis tools of this project and were granted great consideration.

As shown in tables one to four, data from the posttest revealed a considerable level of comprehension of discipleship in comparison to the results found in the pretest.

⁸Dr. J. Baston, "Data Planning and Analysis" (Class Notes: United Theological Seminary, 8/2013), 9.

For instance, question one defines discipleship as a passionate desire to follow Christ and to lead others to him as well; only one participant strongly agreed with that definition in the pre-test, meanwhile data in the posttest revealed ten participants strongly agreed with the very same definition. The findings showed that discipleship was viewed as an entity of the Christian life after the seminar. Data from the post-test in question four revealed sign of progress to become a disciple in comparison with the pre-test. For further detailed results regarding the sixteen questions, tables one through sixteen could be seen in Appendix E.

Questions five to seven were designed to discover how the new converts had understood the concept of love after their baptism, and also how important it is for a disciple to love God and his fellow human beings. In other words, love is the essence of discipleship. A new convert needs to relate intimately with God and develop positive relationships with others (Mt 22:36-37; Jn 13:35). Data from these tables inserted in Appendix E have shown that the new converts had a clearer understanding of the concept after attending the discipleship program. Questions five and seven were to demonstrate their love to God and question six to their fellow human beings. Data from the posttest in question five (89%) compared to those in the pre-test (56%) indicated that the participants had a greater desire to love God. However, love for others was not so significant. It is true that an exhaustive report was not done for each individual; nonetheless, it was fair to admit that participants three, eleven, and thirteen showed a very limited view of the concept even after the session.

Questions eight, nine, and ten focused on the importance of the word of God. The new convert as a disciple is supposed to learn the truth of God's relationship with

humanity through Jesus Christ, the Word of God (Jn 1:1; Mt 4:4). As stated by Jesus himself, the best way to know him is through the study of the Scriptures (Jn 5:39). Data shown in the posttest in comparison to the pre-test were very encouraging. They revealed in the pre-test that the Bible was not quite understood, and showed a more convincing comprehension of the Word of God in the posttest. For example, in the pre-test (question eight), 44% of the participants thought God does not love them because of their sins; however, data in the post-test revealed that 83% believed that God still loves them even though they sin. This section presented another reality about church and fellowship that is expressed in question nine. In the pre-test, only six participants strongly agreed that the church is God's family on earth. Data in the post-test revealed eleven, which is a considerable number.

Questions eleven, twelve, and thirteen aimed at discovering the aptitude of the new converts toward ministering to others or doing mission activities. The new convert has the responsibility to participate in God's mission of revelation, reconciliation, and restoration (Mt 28:19; 25:40; 2 Cor 5: 19). The pre-test data revealed that the participants were reluctant in ministering to others prior to the seminar; only five of them agreed they needed to engage in mission. Data from the post-test results showed a greater aptitude toward missionary works; for thirteen of them strongly agreed that ministering to others is a vital component of a discipleship lifestyle. Responses from questions eleven and thirteen in the post-test showed the participants' commitment to let others know about God (theology), while data from question twelve displayed their willingness to do mission (social work).

Finally, questions fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen were designed to show the importance of equipping and how the participants would engage in learning activities to become more effective Disciples of Christ. The new convert is perceived as a babe in faith, as such he/she needs to intentionally walk alongside other disciples for encouragement and equipping toward maturity in Christ (1 Pt2: 2; Eph 4: 15-16; Dt6: 4-9). Data in question fourteen from the pre-test revealed that 83% of the participants were strongly interested in pastoral training. In the post-test, 89% of them showed their interests for on-going formation. There was no great change in their willingness to training. Data from tables fifteen and sixteen revealed their strong desire to be around those who can help them grow in their spiritual journey. Data from pre-test to posttest indicated that family worship and having religious friends went up from 67% to 94%, and 72% to 89% respectively.

The lectures and questions were conceived in such a way to instill in each participant four basic and critical elements of discipleship (loving, understanding, ministering, and equipping). Each lecture encompassed these four fundamental elements of discipleship.

Discipleship is about deepening relationships. This view is well expressed by Thayer in her book, *Teaching for Discipleship*. The first element, which is love, shows experiences that encourage people to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ through personal and corporate Christian practices; to grow in self understanding; to grow in relationship with others.⁹

Discipleship is not static but dynamic. The second element, understanding, was considered to help the participants to grow in a deeper knowledge of Jesus. It presented

⁹Thayer, *Teaching for Discipleship*, 18.

experiences that give people new knowledge and understanding about Jesus and his teachings so that their love and obedience will increase.¹⁰

The third element, ministering, was selected to teach the new converts that upon acceptance of Christ as their Savior, they needed to engage in God's vineyard. It emphasized experiences that provide opportunities for people to participate in God's mission by living out their call in service to others and in bearing their personal testimony about Christ.¹¹

The fourth element, equipping, was chosen on the basis of the Apostle Paul's advice in Ephesians 4:12-13 to equip the saints for a more effective ministry. It displayed experiences that encourage people to know, claim, and develop their gifts, discern God's call to them, and acquire the knowledge and skills needed to live out that call faithfully and effectively.¹² Don James reinforcing this thought in his booklet, *Orientation to Holistic Groups*, writes. When it comes to discipleship, everyone is a minister. Everyone needs to be equipped!¹³

The question analysis was done per category instead of on an each question basis. Considering information from the tables, it sounds statistically logical to tell that the overall data analysis from pre-test to posttest revealed significant improvement among the participants. Participant seventeen, for example, scored poorly in the pre-test when she had to define discipleship. She fully embraced the concept in the posttest. She said having misunderstood the term because there was in her hometown a religious group that

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Don James, *Orientation to Holistic Groups and the Journey of Discipleship* (Berrien Springs, MI: Open Home Ministries, 2005), 41.

called themselves disciples who seemed using magical tactics to do physical healings. Participants five and thirteen gave testimonials of how they slept well after the presentation on salvation. Participant thirteen exclaimed “This is the very first time I am convinced I cannot earn my salvation but Jesus offers it to me freely.”

Outcome

The purpose of this project was to develop a Christ-based discipleship model that can help every new convert build a good, constant, personal, and spiritual relationship with Jesus. This goal could be reached through various specific objectives. The main objective of this ministry program was to help the new converts become active participants in the church’s life after their baptisms so they can be transformed from members to Disciples.

The primary measurement of the outcome came from the data collected from the pre-test administered to the participants at the launching of the project. The measurement tool was their participation in different church activities. This information has been collected from the report provided by the adherent participants who mentored them and supervised their involvement in several church ministries. Personal observation, data from post-test and face-to-face interviews conducted have enhanced the outcome of this project. In the beginning, the involvement of the new converts appeared very timid. However, throughout the program, significant progress has been noticed in the attitudes of the new converts towards involvement in church activities. This tendency has been also revealed in the answers found in the Participants’ weekly evaluation forms. In short, the hypothesized outcome for this project, which was new converts’ participation in church’s life, has been attained at a considerable level.

Triangulation

To check and establish validity in this project, data triangulation was utilized. Three sets of data were considered, survey (questionnaire), 700-word essay, and face-to-face interviews. Four categories (patterns) and coding were used in the triangulation process, Love for God and fellow human beings (L), Understanding of the Word of God (U), Ministering (M), and Equipping (E). Results obtained from these sources of collection revealed the emergence of these patterns in the data. There were consistencies among the selected categories in each set of data collected. The triangulation showed agreed outcomes. For instance, the category love (L) appeared at 89%, 80%, and 88% respectively in questionnaire, 700-word essay, and face-to-face interviews. Thus, it is likely to consider these outcomes true. Like the other categories, love has been a critical factor in the discipleship accepting among the participants (new converts). More statistical information about these patterns can be found in table seventeen, Appendix E.

Credibility

Information collected in the 700-word essay, face-to-face interviews from the participants have shown great interest from them in the study. As such, the results were judged credible because the participants are the best qualified people that can judge the credibility of this project.

Transferability

Pastors of two other congregations (Roselle, NJ and Chicago, IL) have been contacted and encouraged to implement this project in their churches. They have both

found out that it is workable. There has been no doubt in regard to the transferability of this program in other denominational churches.

Dependability

This project utilized a qualitative methodology approach. There is no need for estimating its reliability in measuring it twice. However, the results obtained proved change in the attitudes and behaviors of the participants in regard to their involvement in church activities and their understanding of discipleship through the following basic elements: love, understanding, ministering, and equipping.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others.¹⁴ This procedure has been documented throughout the study as data have been checked and rechecked for at least three times. Data from the triangulation table are proven source of confirmability.

The task of this current chapter was to describe the program's application, and to present the results, implications, and influence upon ministry at Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church. In the next chapter (six), in-depth reflection and consideration will be given to exhibit a more exhaustive comprehension of the project and its implementation.

¹⁴Baston, "Data Planning and Analysis," 5.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Reflections

When Jesus was on earth, he interacted with many people in different ways, from one-on-one teaching to preaching to multitudes. He called to himself a select group of twelve men known as his disciples. All Jesus did to teach these men his way was to draw them close to himself. That simplicity should still be used today.¹ As God's ambassador on earth, the church needs to be intentional in ways and methods to bring people to Jesus and to keep them. In other terms, in order for the church to lead people into a deeper relationship with Christ, they need to know that they are loved, their felt-needs will be met, and that their talents will be used.

As per Jesus' method, the best way to make new converts become disciples is to draw them close to ourselves. We cannot help the new believers have a good relation with Christ without mingling with them and teaching them the ways to do that. This project has been designed to create this atmosphere of closeness with the new converts of Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church, to enhance their involvement in the church's life, and to help them build a strong and constant relationship with Jesus.

¹Jane Thayer, *Teaching for Discipleship: Strategies for Transformational Learning* (Unpublished, 2009), 2.

In the beginning, the conception of this project was a hazardous attempt because it was the first time such an initiative has been taken. The implementation presented great challenges. Though academically there is no failure for this kind of endeavor; however, the fear of failures has been constant throughout all the phases. Despite the initial fears and struggles, this project has been one of the most rewarding experiences for the church in general, and for the author in particular.

The project at first aimed at the participation of the new converts in church activities. The implementation phase of the project started with eighteen active participants (new converts) and concluded with the same number. Achieving a one hundred participation rate among the new converts registered was greatly encouraging. Participants were required to complete a participant's Evaluation at the end of each topic. These evaluations are one of the main tools used to evaluate the effectiveness of this project. Based upon the answers given by both active participants (new converts) and adherent participants (ministry leaders) on the evaluations, it is evident that this Christ-based discipleship model was successful at aiding in the development of new converts' spiritual maturity toward a strong relationship with Christ as they discovered their place of ministry within the church.

The project was designed to give active participants a deeper appreciation for their faith, a positive image of themselves for being Christ's followers, a love for the church, and a clear comprehension of the call of Jesus. It was also to enable new converts to see themselves as productive disciples in God's field instead of simple religious consumers.

The hope is that this new perceptive will change their attitudes and behaviors. In fact, throughout the seminar the participants have been taught that ministry is not the work of the pastor only. New converts upon accepting Christ as their personal Savior should engage in the work of salvation through witnessing, mission, and service. The apostle Peter made witnessing integral part of the new converts' duty in his first letter. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.² Marlene Wilson, writing about a theology of the priesthood of all the believers, states this view even clearer in her book, *How to Mobilize Church Volunteers*. Ministry is the work of the whole priesthood, and it involves being called by the Holy Spirit to do six things: proclaim, teach, worship, love, witness, and serve.³ On his part, Kidder quoting Ellen G. White expresses that it is the duty of the ministers to teach the members how to labor in the church and in the community.⁴

In regard to involvement, notices of participation were made. According to reports from ministry leaders and personal observation, several participants were willing to pray aloud during Wednesday night meetings. It is also reported that some answered questions without hesitation at their Sabbath school class, and others when they were asked participated in the reading of biblical passages and other ministries.

The primary objective of the project dealt with Transforming new converts from members to Disciples. Hearing testimonies of church officers made the project

²1Pt 2: 9 (NIV).

³Marlene Wilson, *How to Mobilize Church Volunteers* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1983), 15.

⁴S. Joseph Kidder, *The Big Four: Secrets to a Thriving Church Family* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2011), 57.

meaningful. The success of this project has been the result of a combined effort. The approval of the church board, the corroboration of the senior pastor, the willingness of the church ministry leaders, and the unconditional participation of the new converts were remarkable. The church leadership provided all needed logistical tools to make the project a success, especially in terms of attendance. At the same token it is wise to admit that being a disciple is a lifelong journey of transformation. Teaching for a change in attitudes and behaviors is a complicated process that requires a long-term mind-set. Therefore, we cannot say that the project has been completely successful.

Biblical/ Theological Reflections

Even though Jesus was the teacher sent from God, it took him time to make disciples of those who followed him. He was working with people who were less than perfect. Jesus and the disciples walked together and the lessons grew out of real life situations.⁵ The relational aspect experienced by the participants in the small group panel discussion was in harmony with the biblical principles found in the book of Acts. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42). This verse depicted the fellowship of the believers in the early church.

A key element of success in this project was punctuality. Participants knew there was a time to start and a fixed period to end. This has been made possible through the fellowship system set in place during the seminar. After worship service ended, all the participants ate together and shared other issues. This has helped them to better know one another and develop a real sense of brotherhood within the community. Time selection

⁵Thayer, *Teaching for Discipleship*, 16.

for the gatherings has also played a critical role in the success of this project. The Sabbath belongs to God (Exodus 20:9). It was therefore much easier to find and gather all the participants in the church on the day and time previously selected.

This project helps to grasp a better understanding of the Great Commission that Jesus gave to his Disciples before his ascension. It reminds that being a disciple is not optional but mandatory and has eternal consequences. In the case of Jesus' final assignment, we often think that if the new converts have accepted Jesus as their Savior and understand the basic doctrines of the church, this knowledge will lead them into a close walk with Christ. This way of thinking is false and needs to be corrected. The job of the church consists of making disciples. It will take time, but it is normal; for the Gospels portray Christ's disciples as slow learners.⁶

Making disciples is the central assignment included in the Great Commission, and the church does not need to wait months and years to start doing it. Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. The receiver becomes a giver.⁷ Thayer explains this idea very well in her book titled, *Teaching for Discipleship*. The so-called Great Command links a relationship with God and a relationship with other human beings. Love God with all your heart and soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself (Matt.22: 37-38)⁸. If we do not bear fruit, we will be cut off (will not have eternal life).

⁶Ibid., 16.

⁷Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2002), 9.

⁸Thayer, *Teaching for Discipleship*, 16.

Eschatological Reflection

If it is successful, Maranatha church may appear to be the sole beneficiary of the success of this project in the short-term. However, success cannot be hidden to all for long. Other sister churches will be able to implement this model in their own congregations. As more members will be transformed into disciples, the Church in general will experience a great renewal that will lead to an exponential growth. This growth will soon fulfill Jesus' prophecy found in the book of Matthew. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.⁹

Important Suggestions

Throughout the implementation of the project, some adjustments were made. For instance, the weekly report was not part of the initial conception. However, after the first presentation a participant came up with the question about assignment for next meeting, and then the weekly report became a requirement. It has helped keep the participants on the track and made them appear more collaborative. The idea of weekly report was suggested by one of the adolescent active participants, approved by the presenter, and backed by almost 90% of the overall attendance.

This suggestion was in line with the hypothesis formulated for the project. If new converts attend this discipleship seminar, they will show strong commitment toward Christ, become more mature, and involve in church activities. This has been noticed at the launching of the program. This proposition appeared very mature and constituted an important tool for evaluating the effectiveness of the project.

⁹Mt 24:14 (NIV).

The completion of this project has enabled to see where it can be improved. Improvements suggested by participants have been taken into consideration and utilized and will be used for further study. In the area of mentorship, the project needs to be adjusted. In the beginning ministry leaders were selected to be casual mentors; they were not trained enough to be professional mentors. The result and suggestions revealed that mentorship should be an integrant part to this program. Better results would be gained if the ministry leaders were trained and professional mentors.

Another area of improvement mentioned was the creation of formal small groups. The curriculum has instituted a small group panel discussion comprised of three individuals, one ministry leader and two active participants (new converts). As they expressed the joy coming from these small groups, the participants suggested that there should be at least four to six people in each group. These groups created a feeling of fellowship and promoted a sense of community within the body. These small groups have been seen as key to build relationships with one another.

Considerations and Recommendations

Christ has given the mission of making disciples. We need to understand that discipleship cannot stand alone. In his book, *Chris's Way of Making Disciples*, Samaan expresses this view with clarity. Witnessing and disciple-making must always remain linked together. Adding new converts must be followed up with multiplying fruit-bearing disciples.¹⁰ This project has convincingly showed there are several steps to take in order to develop a successful Christ-based discipleship model.

¹⁰Philip G. Samaan, *Christ's Way of Making Disciples* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1999), 10.

First of all, we must emulate Christ's method. It is the only strategy that gives true success. Quoting Ellen G. White in her book, *Ministry of Healing* (143-144), Samaan presented six steps taken by the Master to reach others. Jesus' mingling with others as one who (1) desired their good, (2) sympathized with them, (3) ministered to their needs, (4) won their trust, (5) bade them to follow him, and (6) made them fishers of men.¹¹ These steps lead to the understanding that the church needs to be intentional in doing evangelism if they want to build a Christ-based discipleship model for the new converts.

Developing a successful Christ-based discipleship model for the new converts requires that the congregation does community outreach activities to meet people's needs. There is no effective discipleship model without practical and intentional witnessing. Those who benefit from these felt-needs programs offered by the church will easily join the new community of faith in accepting Jesus as their personal Savior. The new converts then receive training and formation to become disciples and disciple-makers. This must be a continuous process or activity in the life of the church until Christ returns.

In their book, *Finding Them, Keeping Them*, McIntosh and Martin presented five effective strategies to lead people to Christ (Be present in the community, Proclaim the gospel, Persuade people to accept Christ, Help people progress in their Christian life, and Help people produce new believers).¹² The last two strategies go in harmony with the project under study, helping new converts to become mature in their relationship with Christ through equipping so they can be disciple-makers for Christ. They also pinpoint link between evangelism and discipleship. Jones, indeed, argues that evangelism is best

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Gary McIntosh & Glen Martin, *Finding Them, Keeping Them: Effective Strategies for Evangelism and Assimilation in the Local Church* (Nashville, TN: Publishing Group, 1992), 13-15.

understood as an aspect of the church's mission that seeks to help persons enter into Christian discipleship.¹³

The implementation of this project has revealed something very significant about training. It has permitted to identify the spiritual gifts of many participants. In this context Kidder citing Ellen G. White wrote the pastors should first train the members to do evangelism so that the whole church can minister together.¹⁴ As a result of this training, he goes on to say that all churches should make sure that people are in the proper place in their ministry, as God has made them and wired them.¹⁵

There is so much to learn to become a disciple. Discipleship is a long-life activity. This project has been designed to introduce the new converts to the discipleship world. There is no pretention that an exhaustive study was done. Several biblical doctrines were not covered due to the length of this project. It is evident that the new converts who become disciples need to know much more so that they can be transformed in disciple-makers. Much research can be done to display a wider understanding of the concept. There is room for improvement. Not all the objectives were attained, but some of them have been achieved and there are also signs of encouragement that the new converts can be transformed from members to Disciples.

For this project to be more successful in the future, three important factors should be considered prior to its launching. First, a formal mentorship or coaching class should be conducted for church officers. Secondly, it is critical to do spiritual gifts assessment

¹³Scott J. Jones, *The Evangelistic Love of God & Neighbor: A Theology of Witness & Discipleship* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 65.

¹⁴Kidder, *The Big Four*, 57.

¹⁵Ibid.

among the new converts. That will help determine in advance the areas of their giftedness. As such, the applicability of the project will be easier and great results will be recorded even during the implementation phase of the project. Thirdly, the church should put in place several ministries and or services. These ministries need to function in parallel with the program in order to make short-term evaluations.

SUMMARY

The project, consisted of eight specific topics, was implemented at Maranatha French Seventh-day Adventist Church, in Newark, New Jersey. Each module was studied in such a way to help each prospective disciple to discover the importance of loving God and their fellow human beings, understanding the Word of God, ministering to others, being equipped for an effective ministry. There was a small group panel discussion after each presentation in order to facilitate a one-on-one participation. An evaluation report was due on the previous subject studied. A special moment was reserved for questions and answers.

After administering the pre-test to the active participants, the first topic was introduced. It was on discipleship. Historical, biblical, and theological background of the concept was given. As per the data revealed in the post-test, most participants came to the conclusion that discipleship is a divine requirement and were ready to become Disciples.

The second topic was Christ and discipleship. This lecture has helped active participants (new converts) to consider themselves Disciples after baptism. Emphasis has been put on the great commission and most were convinced they are Disciples even though they do not live as such.

The third subject discussed was the Holy Spirit and discipleship. This topic constituted a relief for the attendees. They have admitted that living as a disciple is not easy, but they were comforted to know that Jesus would be with them through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The fourth presentation, The Word of God and discipleship, showed how crucial it is for the disciple to study and understand the Bible. There were several apprehensions, but at the end all discovered that the Holy Spirit will help to comprehend the Scriptures.

The fifth topic, Salvation and discipleship, was one of the most debated subjects. Many questions were raised, such as how someone can be sure that they are saved, considering the enslaving power of sin. Ephesians 2:8 was a great help in answering those hot questions. We all agreed upon the fact that salvation cannot be earned but it is a gift from God. As soon the disciple remains connected to Jesus, their salvation is assured.

The sixth subject was about Prayer and discipleship. On that day, the participants were shown the importance of prayer and were exhorted to do like their Master Jesus, live a life of prayer. They were also taught how to pray and practiced their learning in the small group panel discussion where several questions were raised.

The seventh topic emphasized the relation between Church and discipleship. It was discovered that there is no discipleship life outside the body of Christ. They were thus exhorted to regularly attend church services and participate in sacraments.

The eighth and last topic was about Stewardship. The participants were reminded that they possess nothing but God is the owner of everything. As managers of God's resources, they must wisely use their talents and need to faithfully give financial contributions to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ on earth.

The participation at this project was tremendous. Both active and adherent participants testified of the benefit of this project. They even requested another seminar so that they can know more about discipleship and grow in their relation with Christ. The last day of the seminar was quite different from the other days. A surprise dinner was organized on behalf of the participants. A certificate of recognition and a brief summary of the twenty-eight fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventists were given to each active participant. It was an amazing and unforgettable moment.

Conclusion

The idyllic result of this Christ-based discipleship model would be to see all the new converts becoming disciples. Unfortunately, this did not happen, some participants have not embraced the discipleship concept yet. The expected outcome of this project was that all new converts have a good knowledge of Christ and get involved in church ministry. Based on the results revealed by the data, some progress has been made. The project has been a work in process and has been unable to present an exhaustive result. The program was a short-term endeavor and could not draw long-term conclusions. However, it was worth conceiving and implementing this project for the new converts at Maranatha Seventh-day Adventist Church.

A comprehensive understanding of discipleship is incomplete until it incorporates a passionate desire to follow Jesus and, as a supernatural result, a passionate desire to lead others to Christ, as well.¹⁶ Four areas of discipleship have been selected to measure the success of this project, involvement in regular worship services through presence and participation, commitment to God's word through regular reading and study of the Bible,

¹⁶Dan Solis, *Discipleship: Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, Jan, Feb, Mar 2014), 3.

financial contribution to God's work through tithes and offerings, and involvement in God's work through evangelism and mission. It is true that some good and encouraging reports about the program have been submitted. However, the full accomplishment of these measurements requires time and patience and does not allow drawing definite conclusions yet.

Discipleship is a long-term approach. The project has provided some basic information for the new converts, but discipleship is so much more than information. It is a lifestyle, a long-life process of apprentice, growth, and change. All that could not happen in such a short period of time. Becoming a productive disciple takes time. Thayer is right when she wrote, "A relationship with Christ is not naturally the most basic human need; it becomes the most basic need through supernatural intervention, the grace of God."¹⁷

Even though all the expected outcomes are not met yet, attempting to develop and implement a Christ-based discipleship model aiming at transforming new converts from members to Disciples is a worthwhile endeavor. This attempt goes in line with Thayer's assertion in her unpublished work, *Teaching for Discipleship*, the making of disciples should be the central purpose of every Christian church.¹⁸ A person does not become mature in Christ as soon as she accepts Christ as her Savior. The journey of a disciple is a lifetime experience as it is expressed by James. Discipleship does not stop at baptism, but

¹⁷Thayer, *Teaching for Discipleship*, 4.

¹⁸Ibid., 9.

continues on with mentoring, friendship evangelism, and leadership, until we meet Jesus face to face at that great second coming.¹⁹

It is our responsibility to teach them God's grace and make them disciples. To be productive disciples, the new converts need to be equipped as well. Mentioning the roles and responsibility of the pastor, Greg Ogden writes: "With the elders, the pastor is to encourage the people in their worship and service; to equip and enable them for their tasks within the Church and their mission to the world..., and its task in reaching out in concern and service to the life of the human community as a whole."²⁰ That was exactly one of the main goals of this project, equipping the new converts so that they can be transformed from members to Disciples. Since Christ is the Master of the mission, then the mission of making disciples is doable and possible through Christ who strengthens us.

¹⁹James, *Orientation to Holistic Groups*, 9.

²⁰Ogden, *Unfinished Business*, 131.

APPENDIX A

ACTIVE PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

MARANATHA F SDA CHURCH

DISCIPLESHIP SEMINAR: APRIL 19 – JUNE 17, 2014

ACTIVE PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Name: _____ & Phone: _____

Are you a baptized member of the church? Yes [] No []

I have been baptized for less than 2 years. Yes [] No []

Gender: Female [] Male []

Age Group: 16-20 [], 21-29 [], 30 -39 [], 40+ []

1. I will do my best to attend the 8 sessions of this seminar. Yes [] No []

2. I will give my full participation in all the activities. Yes [] No []

3. I will treat each individual with a godly respect. Yes [] No []

4. I will do and submit my assignment on a timely basis. Yes [] No []

5. I will keep all confidential information secret. Yes [] No []

6. I will behave accordingly with the established rules and principles. Yes [] No []

7. I am attending this seminar to know more about Jesus. Yes [] No []

8. I promise to share my knowledge of Jesus with other people. Yes [] No []

The seminar is held in a Christian environment. Any misconduct will prevent me from attending part or all the presentations.

Print your name here:

Sign your name there:

Date

APPENDIX B
PRE & POST-TEST QUESTIONS

PRE & POST-TEST QUESTIONS

(With slight modification in some post-test questions)

Instructions I: Your Understanding of the concept Discipleship. For each of the following statements, choose the answers that best describe your thoughts.

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N =Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

[1]. Discipleship is a passionate desire to follow Jesus and lead others to him as well.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

[2]. The Gospel commission indicates that the basic mission of the church is to make disciples.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

[3]. The goal of every disciple is to become like Jesus.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

[4]. I want to be an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

Instructions II: Basic elements of Discipleship (Love, Understanding, Ministering, Equipping).

For each of the following statements, choose the answers that best describe your thoughts.

5. I am interested in programs that would help me learn more about gaining a deeper loving relationship with God.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

6. It is important to me to show love to other people.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

7. It is important to me to spend time in private thoughts and prayer with God.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

8. I am sure that I am loved by God even when I sin.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

9. It is convincing to me that the church is God's family on earth, a community of faith in which members, all equal in Christ, join for worship, instruction, service, and fellowship.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

My body is the temple of God. I feel responsible for its care.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

11. During the last semester I have told others about the work of God in my life.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

12. I often spend some volunteer hours helping others with problems they have.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

13. I have sometimes tried to lead someone to Christ after my conversion.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

14. The church leadership has greatly helped me develop my religious faith.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

15. Family worship has considerably helped me develop my relationship with God.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

16. It is crucial to me to have friends who regularly attend religious services.

SD () D () N () A () SA ()

APPENDIX C

FORMAT SAMPLE TOPIC PRESENTATION

FORMAT SAMPLE TOPIC PRESENTATION

EXAMPLE: PRAYER

1. CLIMATE CONTROL GUIDE

- A. Organizational Climate (Arrange for small group relationships and learning).
- B. Social Climate (Help participants be comfortable to share their experiences).
- C. Climate for doing learning tasks (Help participants be positive in accomplishing their learning goals).

2. GENERAL DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- A. Knowledge – Upon successful completion of the presentation, participants will understand that a disciple cannot live without prayer.
- B. Skills and Behaviors – Upon completion of the workshop, participants will be able to pray properly, lead a group in a meeting prayer.
- C. Attitudes, Values, Commitments – Upon completion of the workshop, participants will make a commitment to develop a lifestyle of prayer.

3. SPECIFIC DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- A. Knowledge: Upon completion of this presentation, the participants will
 - a. Be able to define prayer as per the biblical understanding.
 - b. Know how prayer is a tool of communication.
 - c. Know that God answers personal prayer.
 - d. Be assured that God responds collective prayer.
 - e. Understand that prayer is a continuous activity. Know that Jesus values prayer.
- B. Skills and Behaviors: Upon completion of this workshop, participants will

- f. Feel the necessity of prayer.
- g. Be able to share their prayer experiences with others.
- h. Pray God with conviction and assurance.
- i. Feel that it is normal to pray without ceasing.
- C. Attitudes, Values, Commitments: After this seminar, participants will
- j. Value the importance of prayer.
- k. Commit themselves to leading a life of prayer.
- l. Pray before making an important decision.
- m. Commit them to pray for others.

STRATEGY:

1. Devotion
2. Telling: Welcome the participants and give ground for this workshop is taken place.
3. Illustration. Ask each person to hold their breathing for about 3 to 5 minutes...
4. Ice-breaker: Have each participant look for a partner and greet each other.
5. Discussion 1: Each participant gives a definition of prayer in their small group panel.
6. Presentation: Notes and Power point – We are all disciples of Jesus. We are supposed to reproduce what he did. His entire life was a life of prayer. When he woke up in the morning, the first thing he did was communicate to his Father (Mark 1:35). Prayer occupied every aspect of his ministry, for he was constantly in contact with God through prayer. Not only did he teach his disciples how to pray, but he also gave them reasons to pray (Luke 11:9-13), and particular not to

fall into temptation (Mat.26:41). If we need food to keep our physical in good shape, we need prayer as well to keep our spiritual up. If Jesus who has never sinned spent so much time in prayer, it is more than necessary for us to set time aside for prayer. As disciples, let us follow Jesus' habit (Luke 5:16).

7. Discussion: Read in groups 3 different modes of prayer (Dominical in Matthew 6)
 - Have each participant share their personal experiences of prayer – Conclude with a series of prayer, two by two.
8. Questions and answers.
9. Commitment: each participant chooses a partner and engages to pray for them.
10. Wrap-up: summarize what we have seen so far. When we pray to God, we develop an intimacy with him (Love) – When we pray, we understand better the Word of God (understanding) – When we pray for others (ministering), we want good for them – When we pray, the Holy Spirit prepares (equipping) us for a better ministry.
11. Closing prayer and Reminder of assignment (Assessment or Participants' Evaluation).

APPENDIX D
SAMPLE ASSESSMENT FORM

APPENDIX D

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT FORM

Instructions:

For each of the following statements, circle the numbers that best describe your thoughts.

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N =Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree

Outcome Assessment

1. This presentation helped me discover that prayer is a tool of communication with God.

SD	D	N	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

2. I am now more reliable to share my prayer experiences with others.

SD	D	N	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

3. I am committed myself to pray for others.

SD	D	N	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

4. I will make plan to attend all the other presentations.

SD	D	N	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

Any comments:

APPENDIX E
PARTICIPANTS OVERALL PERFORMANCE

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANTS OVERALL PERFORMANCE

PRE & POST-TEST Part I

Table 1: Results to [1]. Discipleship is a passionate desire to follow Jesus and lead others to him as well.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	3	17		0	0
Disagree	4	22		0	0
Neutral	2	11		1	5
Agree	8	44		7	39
Strongly agree	1	06		10	56

Table 2: Results to [2]. The Gospel commission indicates that the basic mission of the church is to make disciples.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	4	22		0	0

Disagree	2	11		0	0	
Neutral	1	6		1	6	
Agree	9	50		5	28	
Strongly agree	2	11		12	66	

Table 3: Results to [3]. The goal of every disciple is to become like Jesus.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	3	17		0	0
Disagree	2	11		0	0
Neutral	5	28		0	0
Agree	6	33		5	28
Strongly agree	2	11		13	72

Table 4: Results to [4]. I want to be an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	1	6		0	0

Disagree	3	16		0	0	
Neutral	1	6		1	6	
Agree	9	50		5	28	
Strongly agree	4	22		12	66	

PRE & POST-TEST Part II

Table 5: Results to 5. . I am interested in programs that would help me learn more about gaining a deeper loving relationship with God.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	1	6		0	0
Disagree	3	16		0	0
Neutral	0	0		0	0
Agree	4	22		2	11
Strongly agree	10	56		16	89

Table 6: Results to 6. It is important to me to show love to other people.

PRE-TEST				POST-TEST		
	%				%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100	
Strongly disagree	1	6		0	0	
Disagree	3	16		1	6	
Neutral	3	17		1	6	
Agree	9	50		9	50	
Strongly agree	2	11		7	38	

Table 7: Results to 7. It is important to me to spend time in private thoughts and prayer with God.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	0	0		0	0
Disagree	0	0		0	0
Neutral	2	11		1	5
Agree	6	33		1	6
Strongly agree	10	56		16	89

Table 8: Results to 8. I am sure that I am loved by God even when I sin.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	8	44		0	0
Disagree	3	17		0	0
Neutral	1	5		1	6
Agree	5	28		2	11
Strongly agree	1	6		15	83

Table 9: Results to [9]. It is convincing to me that the church is God's family on earth, a community of faith in which members, all equal in Christ, join for worship, instruction, service, and fellowship.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	1	5		0	0
Disagree	3	17		0	0
Neutral	1	6		1	6

Agree	7	39		6	33	
Strongly agree	6	33		11	61	

Table 10: Results to 10. My body is the temple of God. I feel responsible for its care.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	0	0		0	0
Disagree	0	0		0	0
Neutral	2	11		0	0
Agree	10	56		6	33
Strongly agree	6	33		12	67

Table 11: Results to 11. During the last semester I have told others about the work of God in my life.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	2	11		0	0
Disagree	10	56		0	0

Neutral	1	5		2	11	
Agree	5	28		3	17	
Strongly agree	0	0		13	72	

Table 12: Results to 12. I often spend some volunteer hours helping others with problems they have.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	2	11		0	0
Disagree	5	28		0	0
Neutral	1	6		1	5
Agree	8	44		5	28
Strongly agree	2	11		12	67

Table 13: Results to 13. I have sometimes tried to lead someone to Christ after my conversion.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100

Strongly disagree	5	28		0	0	
Disagree	7	39		0	0	
Neutral	0	0		2	11	
Agree	5	28		3	17	
Strongly agree	1	5		13	72	

Table 14: Results to 14. The church pastor has greatly helped me develop my religious faith.

PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
	%			%	
Number of participants	18	100		18	100
Strongly disagree	0	0		0	0
Disagree	0	0		0	0
Neutral	1	6		0	0
Agree	2	11		2	11
Strongly agree	15	83		16	89

Table 15: Results to 15. Family worship has considerably helped me develop my relationship with God.

PRE-TEST				POST-TEST		
	%			%		
Number of participants	18	100		18	100	
Strongly disagree	0	0		0	0	
Disagree	1	6		0	0	
Neutral	2	11		1	6	
Agree	3	16		0	0	
Strongly agree	12	67		17	94	

Table 16: Results to 16. It is crucial to me to have friends who regularly attend religious services.

	PRE-TEST				POST-TEST		
	%				%		
Number of participants	18	100			18	100	
Strongly disagree	0	0			0	0	
Disagree	1	6			0	0	
Neutral	3	16			0	0	
Agree	1	6			2	11	

Strongly agree	13	72		16	89	
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Table 17 – Data Triangulation

Categories	Coding		Questionnaire	700-Word Essay	Interviews
Love	L		16/18 or 89%	8/10 or 80%	7/8 or 88%
Understanding	U		15/18 or 83%	7/10 or 70%	6/8 or 75%
Ministering	M		13/18 or 72%	7/10 or 70%	6/8 or 75%
Equipping	E		17/18 or 94%	9/10 or 90%	8/8 or 100%

L (Loving): Love for God and fellow human beings.

U (Understanding): Understanding the Word of God.

M (Ministering): Witnessing through evangelism and service.

E (Equipping): Being equipped for a more effective witnessing.

APPENDIX F
FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

APPENDIX F

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Based on what you have learned on these four characteristics (Love, Understanding the Word of God, Ministering, and Equipping) of discipleship during the seminar, please answer the following questions:

1. Why are you interested in programs that would help you learn more about gaining a deeper loving relationship with God?
2. Why and how important is it to you to show love to other people?
3. Why do you need to spend time in private thoughts and prayer with God?
4. Can you tell why you are sure that you are loved by God even when you sin?
5. Why should you feel responsible for taking care of your body?
6. Why have you told others about the work of God in your life during the past week?
7. Why and how often do you help others with their problems?
8. How often and why have you tried to lead someone to Christ?
9. How much and why you think that training is important to you?
10. Why and how your family has helped you in your relationship with God?

APPENDIX G
QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX G

QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions: Basic elements of Discipleship (Love, Understanding, Ministering, Equipping).

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being the weakest and 5 the strongest), how do you answer the following questions?

1. How interested are you in programs that would help you learn more about gaining a deeper loving relationship with God?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

2. How important is it to you to show love to other people?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

3. Is it important to you to spend time in private thoughts and prayer with God?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

4. How sure are you that you are loved by God even when you sin?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

5. How convincing is it to you that the church is God's family on earth, a community of faith in which members, all equal in Christ, join for worship, instruction, service, and fellowship?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

6. Your body is the temple of God. Do you feel responsible for its care?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

7. How often during the last semester have you told others about the work of God in your life?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

8. How often do you spend some volunteer hours helping others with problems they have?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

9. How often after your conversion have you tried to lead someone to Christ?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

10. How much has the church leadership helped you develop your religious faith?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

11. How much has family worship helped you develop your relationship with God?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

12. How important is it to you to have friends who regularly attend religious services?

1 () 2 () 3 () 4 () 5 ()

APPENDIX H
THEME SONG

APPENDIX H**THEME SONG**

Seigneur, mon âme

I

Seigneur, mon âme soupire

Après tes divins parvis,

Pour t'écouter et m'instruire,

A tes pieds toujours assis.

Choeur

Forme-moi pour ton service,

A ton école ô Jésus,

Que par ton Esprit je puisse

Prêcher ton nom aux perdus.

II

Seigneur, tu sais toute chose,

Je t'aime et je suis à toi;

De moi tout entier dispose,

Je suis l'esclave du Roi!

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